Political Culture Revisited
Author(s): Lucian W. Pye
Source: *Political Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Sep., 1991), pp. 487-508
Published by: International Society of Political Psychology
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3791758
Accessed: 01-04-2020 08:51 UTC

REFERENCES
Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/3791758?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents
You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

Classics in Political Psychology

Political Culture Revisited

Lucian W. Pye[1]

Although culture is one of the most powerful concepts in the social sciences, the discipline of political science was slow to exploit it in spite of its obvious relevance for many basic concerns in the discipline, such as legitimacy, tradition, constitutional norms, and basic national values. However, once the concept was accepted in the 1950s there was a decade of intense interest in cultural analysis during which leading figures in all the social sciences engaged in bold theory-building. For various reasons interest in political culture declined in the 1970s, but recently there has been a revival of work on political culture. A review of the early history may be helpful in ensuring that the revival will proceed on a solid basis.

KEY WORDS: political culture; discipline; theory building.

INTRODUCTION

In the social sciences there are only a few mega-concepts, dominant ideas that shape a discipline but also spill over into other disciplines. There is, for example, the concept of the market, central to economics but also of proven value in rational choice and cost-benefit analyses in political science. Other mega-concepts include class and community in sociology, power and personality in political science and psychology. Arguably the most powerful of these in its far-reaching but subtle implications is the concept of culture, particularly after the concept has been enriched by the insights and theories of depth psychology.

This version of the concept of culture exploded onto the scholarly scene in the late 1930s and early 1940s at a time when the social sciences were in an exalted state, coming of age when the world was filled with problems that seemed readymade for the aspiring powers of the new "behavioral sciences."

[1]Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.

America was just awakening from its isolation and there was an exciting world out there to be explored. As we fought first the Depression and then World War II, we also became fascinated with ourselves. So by the end of the war there were lots of different societies and peoples to be understood. Totalitarianism, both German and Soviet, needed to be explained; there was the question of the comparative prospects for democracy and communism; the new states of Africa and Asia were facing the challenge of nation-building; world politics was being transformed by both the atomic bomb and by the new communications age. The intellectual atmosphere was one of excitement and promise as bold ideas and theories were being advanced on all sides. The goal of those bringing "science" to the study of human affairs was to see connections, relationships, correlations (yes, cause and effect) where none had been noted before, while always guarding against harebrained theories. The new sciences had the quality of magic for they spoke of relationships that were not visible, but the results were real and testable. Analysis was in, description was out. It didn't matter whether it was "thick description" or thin, it was "mere description"—intellectual blah, boring, pedestrian. To utter a banality called for an apology, and if one had to elucidate the obvious it was to be done with convoluted sentences and a vocabulary of polysyllabic words. New knowledge meant new power, as for example with the economists' boasts that, armed with Keynes's general theory, they had made depressions a thing of the past and they were now about to bring economic development to the backward countries. Theories abounded to explain everything from child training to the dynamics of social systems, and even, with Toynbee, the history of civilizations.

In the decade before Pearl Harbor, American intellectual life was also jarred out of its traditional ways by a flood of exceptional refugee scholars who included some of the best and the brightest thinkers of Europe. As they fitted into American universities they not only assaulted the conventional disciplinary barriers but they also raised profound questions about what had gone wrong in Europe. How could the continent that had been the home of the Enlightenment and the driving spirit of modern, rational, industrial society have produced the abominations of Hitler's Naziism, Mussolini's fascism and Stalin's communism? To get answers to such troubling questions they felt compelled to explore the human psyche, and to bring together knowledge from every field, from psychology and sociology to history and anthropology. Stimulated by powerful thinkers from Europe, American scholars soon adapted to this style of work and became equally engaged in asking profound questions.

It was in this atmosphere of creativity that anthropology pioneered in exploiting the insights of psychoanalysis in dealing with some key problems of the social sciences. This gave anthropology an extraordinary burst of intellectual energy, so it became a king discipline at a time when Americans needed to

radically reshape their thinking in order to understand the ways of a host of foreign societies. Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas had earlier in the 1920s and thirties given anthropology its leg up when they took the study of culture away from eccentric, upper-class Englishmen who had been wandering the world to pick up tidbits of folklore for their "golden boughes." They established the idea that cultures had a dynamic coherence in that there was a definite interrelationship between the whole and the parts; that is, between the structure of the culture and the personality characteristics of the individuals. The core of the discipline now came to be "culture and personality."

The frantic need during the war to train Americans about other cultures led to the creation of area studies, a unique American academic invention, in which anthropology played a significant role. The discipline that had contented itself with describing and interpreting the folkways of primitive, village-scale cultures now declared itself ready to "come home" and to answer questions about the major powers of the world. The hubris of anthropology at that time is reflected in such books as Clyde Kluckholn's *Mirror for Man*. Give the self-confidence of anthropology it did not seem strange at all that Kluckhohn himself should have been appointed the first director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard, one of the earliest area studies programs. At Yale, anthropologist George P. Murdock's Human Relations Area Files was greatly expanded so as to embrace all the major countries of the world. Anthropology, armed with the concept of culture, was ready and anxious to explain behavior in all societies.

Immediately after World War II a generation of American undergraduates was also being taught the importance of cultural differences, and their texts were Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* and Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, which had appeared in the 1930s. As the United States shed its isolationism and became a global power, American educators were convinced that its future citizens would have to appreciate cultural differences and thus end a tradition of ethnocentrism which it was assumed took one of two forms. Americans, it was thought, either saw all non-Americans as undifferentiated "foreigners," different from us but like each other; or they believed all people were just like us, without any distinctive character of their own.

These developments were not lost on political science. In 1948 in the first issue of *World Politics* the political scientist Nathan Leites published a seminal methodological article, "Psychocultural Hypotheses About Political Acts," which came very close to using the concept of political culture. It was odd, however, that it was not until 1956 that Gabriel Almond explicitly brought the concept of culture to political science and established the theory of political culture. Its tardy arrival was surprising because political science is a preeminently American discipline, not just because over 90% of political scientists are either Americans or American-trained, but also because political science, like the

American economy, freely "imports" ideas from other fields, with no regard to the "balance of trade," and is thus blissfully unconcerned about its own "exports," or even whether it has any to give to the other social sciences.

The slowness of political science in latching onto the concept of political culture is made even more surprising because, first, the concept answered several needs in political science, and second, as a discipline it had already been sensitized to the values of depth psychology. All classical theorists from Aristotle and Plato through Montesquieu and Tocqueville have stressed the importance for understanding politics in terms of customs, mores, traditions, norms, and habits—all of which are aspects of culture. Both Aristotle and Montesquieu were explicit in identifying certain key values as being critical in determining the character of different types of political systems. For Aristotle democracy depended upon the attitudes and values of a middle class; for Montesquieu the critical value for monarchy was honor, for democracy integrity, and for tyranny fear. Moreover, the fundamental concept of legitimacy, which is central to political philosophy, is obviously enriched when viewed in cultural terms. Similarly the concept of ideology, not in the Marxian dogmatic sense, but as used by Max Weber and Karl Mannheim, is also very close to culture—indeed, Clifford Geertz (1973, pp. 193–229) has suggested that they are essentially the same. Thus, while political science may have been slow in picking up the concept of political culture in the 1950s, it was ready to make quick and extensive use of the concept once it was introduced.

The delay in accepting the psychologically enriched concept of culture in political science may have been due in part to the way in which Freudian psychology had been earlier brought to the discipline. This took place in the 1930s when Charles Merriam sent Harold Lasswell to Vienna to find out more about what Dr. Freud was discovering about human motivations. Lasswell quickly appreciated the potential of Freud's insights, but he disagreed with Freud on how to apply psychoanalysis in social and political analysis. Whereas Freud, in such works as *Totem and Taboo,* saw human evolution as a reenactment of the stages of individual "libidinal" development, and a playing out of the clash of id and superego, Lasswell made the critical decision that institutions should be seen as having their own separate histories, and that psychoanalytical interpretations should only be used to explain the behavior of individuals as they perform historically defined roles within institutions. The strength of Lasswell's *Psychopathology and Politics* lay in its detailed analysis of the life experiences of people with different ideological orientations, who were performing a variety of political roles, from administrators to agitators. Although Lasswell was interested in group psychology with respect to propaganda, he did not try to explain differences among political systems in psychological terms. Thus, Freudian psychology was kept at the individual level during its first introduction into political science. (Two unfortunate events have incalculably hurt the advance of political

psychology. The first happened in 1938 when Harold Lasswell left the University of Chicago with the intention of joining forces with the psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan and the cultural anthropologist Edward Sapir to establish a program on culture and personality at the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation in Washington, D.C. The two moving vans carrying Lasswell's files collided on the highway and the years' of work he had done in collecting psychiatric data at St. Elizabeth's and other hospitals, and from numerous doctor's offices, went up in flames. Sapir died the next year, the funding for the enterprise fell through, and Lasswell, with a vision of what top quality research in the field should be, turned his attention to other matters. The other tragedy occurred in 1987 when Nathan Leites died and left file boxes filled with thousands of quotations that he had picked out from nearly 4 years of reading all available Western language translations of Chinese materials, and which he had meticulously classified into more than two thousand categories. The work was clearly to be a companion volume to his *A Study of Bolshevism* and thus a study of Chinese behavior to match his work on the Soviet elite. But all searches have been to no avail to find the code book that would explain the categories. I have found it impossible to work backward from the numbered quotations to try to figure out what the general propositions or themes Leites was seeking to illuminate by the categories. His extraordinary effort, like Lasswell's years of collecting interview data, has thus been lost to science.)

This approach was consistent with the focus of the early behavioral revolution in which the act was the unit of analysis, and institutions, such as the state, were disaggregated and analyzed in terms of specific people performing designated roles. Power was defined as the participation in the making of decisions, and decisions always involved specific individuals, not abstract collectivities. It was not the "State Department," or the "Presidency," or "Congress" which made decisions, but particular individual diplomats, officials, or legislators.

Lasswell's great contribution in decision-making theory was his formula that "political man" involves private motives being displaced on public objects and rationalized as being in the public interest. That is to say, the energizing force which drives politicians and political activists lies in their unconscious and is thus basic to their personal make-up and not just the logical application of cognitive calculations for maximizing value preferences. In short, one should not extend to politicians the courtesies U.S. senators show each other, which is to ascribe no motives to colleagues beyond their publicly stated ones. Rather, political analysts should assume that politicians are driven by private motives and personality characteristics which are generally established early in life. By pointing out how tricky the question of motives can be, Lasswell cut much of the ground out from under the analytical utility of the concept of rationality since that concept presumes that one can ascertain the real motives of public figures.

Lasswell's emphasis upon the psychology of the individual was also applied

early to the study of citizen participation in politics. The study of voting behavior gained momentum by looking beyond party identification and instead emphasizing socioeconomic factors, and such demographic considerations as age, sex and education, on the assumption that motivations are formed by the social and cultural backgrounds of people. This was the approach that informed a host of exciting studies about why people did or did not vote that began with Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell (1924) and was continued by Angus Campbell, Phillip Converse, Warren Miller and others through the work of the Michigan Survey Research Center, and is to be found in the major studies by Robert Lane (1959) and Seymour Martin Lipset (1960). In short, what Merriam and Lasswell had set in motion was the behavioral revolution in the study of political motivation which soon came to dominate the discipline, and never died out in spite of the rise of the rational-choice approach.

By the early 1950s, however, the problems calling for analysis had changed, particularly in the field of comparative politics, largely because of the dramatic emergence, following the end of colonialism, of a host of new states. The emerging nations did not have well-institutionalized governments and therefore there was need for new concepts to describe them. Even traditional political scientists, untouched by the behavioral revolution, realized that it was absurd to apply to such societies the established concepts of statehood and of conventional governmental institutions. At this point Gabriel Almond took the lead in classifying different types of nations according to a structural-functional theory about national politics. He defined the political system in terms of a series of functions that might be performed by different structures. (Thus for example, the legislative or rule-making function might be performed by a dominant party in one system, the military in another, and legislatures in still others.) Talcott Parsons had already led the way in thinking of societies as integrated systems. Even though Parsons rejected the idea that politics could be a system comparable to either the economic or social systems, his and Shils's *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1952) had a profound influence at that time on political science. (Talcott Parsons insisted that is was impossible to develop a general systems theory of politics because of the particularistic nature of the political process. Subscribing to the traditional liberal interpretation of the nature of politics— which includes Locke's emphasis upon battles over property rights, Madison's theories about interests as the driving force in creating political factions, and Lasswell's definition of politics as "who gets what, when, and how,"—Parsons saw politics as ceaseless conflicts over both material and nonmaterial values. For him, politics covered everything from battles over property rights and economic interests to contention over status position, religious and ethnic identities, ideological preferences, and not least, the striving to gain honor and deference and to vent aggression. Precisely because politics always revolves around questions of whose ox is being gored, political issues were, in his view, inevitably parochial,

situated in specific time and space, and hence not generalizable, as would be necessary in the development of a general theory. He acknowledged that Marxism sought such a univeralistic basis by making class struggle the only authentic issue for conflict, but in his view this meant that almost all of politics fell outside of the scope of the Marxist paradigm. In a conversation, he once suggested that if one took 2-week samples of all *New York Times* political stories at 5-year intervals, there would be extensive turnover as far as the concrete issues of the day. Moreover, he guessed that less than 5 percent of the controversies could be classed as "class struggle," and even to get that number it would be necessary to define class struggle so loosely as to make Marxist theory into intellectual mush. In a sense Parsons turned Marx on his head by suggesting that what the father of Communism had dismissed as the mere "superstructure," the game-playing of the ruling class, was in fact the real politics which drives history, and that "class struggle" properly defined is only a miniscule part of the story. Parsons also rejected the proposal that power could be made to serve the function which money plays in making economics a legitimate general systems theory. He saw power as having far too many forms and thus always being idiosyncratic with respect to each particular powerholder. Moreover, power cannot be quantified or ranked on a cardinal scale, as is possible with money.) David Easton, among others, also pushed ahead with the model of the political system as having a series of inputs, the "black-box" of government, and outputs. Karl Deutsch in his *Nerves of Government* made explicit the idea that the political system could be seen as analogous to a computer and thus could be analyzed in terms of the new theories of cybernetics.

In a sense, political science was going through a transition comparable to what Keynes had brought to economics with his general or macrotheory about economic systems, which shifted the traditional emphasis away from microtheory about market behavior and focused attention on the total flow of money, the relationship of savings to investments, and the effects of government fiscal and monetary policies on the general level of employment and prices. The early behavioral work, including Lasswell's, had dealt primarily with the dynamics of the political process—"Who gets what, when, and how"—and thus was in the tradition of the exchange relationships that are basic to micro-economics. Lasswell (1930) had come close to picturing politics as a system in his somewhat vague discussions of the "state as a manifold of events." The theory of national politics as a system of functions and processes brought to the discipline a macroperspective of in-puts and out-puts in which social and psychological conditions strongly influenced the in-puts and the psychology of the leaders could be critical in the decisions about the policy out-puts.

Where political science was profoundly different from economics was in its acceptance of the findings of psychology. Economics has limited itself to the rational actor and has taken the preferences inherent in utility functions as givens

without asking how they might have come about. [Aaron Wildavsky makes the important point that political scientists, irrespective of what the economists do, have an obligation to study the sources of preferences, and when they do so they will be driven to studying culture. See his "Choosing preferences by constructing institutions: A cultural theory of preference formation," *American Political Science Review 81* (1987), 3–21.] Political science has always sought to combine the best of both sociology and psychology since its domain covers both the collectivity and the individual, the state and society on the one hand, and the leader and the citizen on the other. All the great thinkers of classical political philosophy tried to incorporate into their theories the most advanced knowledge about individual human behavior. Thus it was entirely appropriate for the discipline to try to embrace the findings of psychoanalysis.

This, however, was not easy, for it was realized early that there was a micro–macro problem of how to elevate the findings about individual behavior to the behavior of collectives. It was here that the lead taken by anthropology in developing a theory of culture and personality proved invaluable. Indeed, the concept of political culture seemed perfect for filling the bill.

TRYING TO DEFINE POLITICAL CULTURE

Yet right from the beginning, there were differences over how the concept of culture should be defined and used. To some extent the differences were carried over from developments in anthropology and psychology. A key approach was the theoretical position of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer, among others, who treated personality and culture as opposite sides of the same coin. Culture for them was the generalized personality of a people, in the sense that the modal personality of a people was their culture, and thus culture and personality were essentially identical factors shaping behavior. At the other extreme there were those who sought to understand culture without reference to any personality dimensions. Culture was to them the history of the collectivity, and in the spirit of Durkheim, they rejected any need to look at individuals in order to understand group behavior. Between the two extremes there were those who focused on the socialization process as the key link between culture on the one hand and personality on the other. Thus, in the works of Abram Kardiner (1945), Ralph Linton (1945), and John Whiting and Irvin Child (1953), among others, the realities of the culture shaped the socialization processes of a society, and the personalities produced in turn shaped the culture. The team of Whiting and Child were able to test their theories by remarkable demonstrations wherein they accurately predicted the socialization practices of a society after being given only the main facts about the culture. The boldest attempt to make personality the key to social and economic development was possibly David McClelland's effort

to devise a scale for measuring the "need for achievement" or "n-ach." Mc-Clelland (1953), building on Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic and the rise of capitalism, argued that the level of economic development among countries was a function of the degree to which people in each society were driven by a psychological need to achieve, a basic need which compels people to achieve more than is necessary for mere survival. (McClelland even sought to give an applied dimension to his theory by developing a course for teaching Indians and others in the Third World how to raise their "need for achievement." It is questionable whether he was any more successful than the Protestant mission-aries had been in their century-long efforts to bring their message of the work ethic.)

Although in retrospect it is possible to impose a sense of order on the various studies, at the time the spirit of excitement was such that there seemed no merit in trying to discriminate in terms of even the crudest of typologies. Instead of being seen as competitive, the different approaches reinforced each other. For American intellectuals, France, for example, became a far more interesting soci-ety with the appearance of such varied works on Laurence Wylie's *A Village in the Vaucluse*, Stanley Hoffman et al.'s *In Search of France*, Michael Crozier's *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* and Nathan Leites's several studies of French politics.

In the first phases of political-culture work, there was a tendency to think in terms of national character. Some of this work was quite outstanding, as in the case of Ruth Benedict's amazingly insightful and solid analysis of Japanese culture in *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Another impressive early study was the psychiatrist Henry V. Dicks's study of Russian character based on extensive interviews with defectors. Dicks found that the outstanding trait of Russian personality was a profound ambivalence between action and inaction, between wishful thinking and passively accepting fate, between a need for quick gratifica-tion and patient submissiveness, between impatiently wanting change and cynically dismissing the possibility for improvements. Russian leaders, however, felt that they could rise above the weaknesses of the masses, but their appeals for discipline made them prone to the authoritarianism inherent in the Russian auto-cratic tradition in ruling. Reading Dicks today makes one almost feel as though he were describing the actions of, and the popular responses to, Mikhail Gor-bachev, Yegor Ligachev, and Boris Yeltsin.

In another study of Russian personality Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman (1945) went a bit too far for most political scientists, however, in tracing Russian character to the practice of swaddling babies. They hypothesized that the practice of tightly wrapping infants produced extremes of privation and gratification which predisposed adult Russians to their extremes of submissiveness and ex-plosive violence, of greed and abstinence, and their willingness to submit to brutal authority. Skeptics called the theory "diaperology," but it also came at a

time when educated Americans were fascinated with theories of child training and were therefore hypersensitive to the possible lasting consequences of whatever was done in the care of infants.

The national-character approach was, however, brought to an almost complete stop in 1954 as the result of an article by Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson which was supposed to have been written in the spirit of constructive criticism but which called for impossibly high scientific standards. Inkeles never rejected the idea of national character; he only made it impractical to use it.

In the transition of culture theory from anthropology to political science, there was considerable initial uncertainty about how to treat childhood socialization. It soon became clear that it was a huge jump to go from, say, toilet training to the behavior of government officials. The problem was eased somewhat by the introduction of the concept of political socialization and political recruitment. It was thus postulated that after the early socialization into the general culture there was a second process of political socialization in which people learned about the political system. This addition was welcomed by those who were instinctively uncomfortable about psychoanalytical theorizing. They could now turn to learning theory and cognitive development as theories which they felt gave more weight, and hence respect, to rationality. By the early 1960s, there were numerous studies about how schoolchildren learned about politics and what they thought about political figures and institutions.

Rather farfetched linkages of cause and effect were tolerated not only by behavioral scientists but also by the more sedate disciplines, such as history. William Langer, in his presidential address to the American Historical Association, had called for the acceptance of psychoanalysis for explaining the conduct of historical figures. In the field of intellectual history, scholars were tracing the trail of ideas in terms of the most subtle of empirical hints.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Much of the early work on political culture was caught up in '50s-era excitement over the ability of political science to figure out the prospects for political development of new states in developing areas. Moreover, this excitement took place in the context of a world which had just seen the brief success of such seemingly irrational ideological movements as Naziism and was now confronting the potential spread of Communism. The problems of political development clearly called for interdisciplinary research. Anthropological studies of African and Asian cultures appeared to offer rich material for understanding the processes associated with nation-building. The prospects for economic development also clearly depended upon human motivations and hence the appearance of psychologically oriented theories created by such economists as Everett Hagen.

At the time, India was seen as the archetype of developing countries and in a surprisingly short period social scientists from several disciplines, helped by the concept of culture, became interested in and knowledgeable about Indian society.

In an understandable way, the theories about the "crisis of modernization" and of "mass society" which were formulated in the 1930s and '40s to explain the rise of totalitarianism in Europe influenced the early work on the developing countries. These theories stressed the likelihood of connections between economic and social conditions and the moods of people and therefore pointed to likely political trends. Such works as Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* and Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism,* which emphasized the consequences of people's feeling rootless in the modern world, made it seem not unlikely that people caught between their old traditional cultures and the modern world might also feel rootless and be inclined to want the comforts of totalistic ideologies. Thus, work on developments in the industrialized countries, such as the study of McCarthyism in terms of the rise of a "radical right" on the part of an insecure middle class, put the spotlight on the possible psychological insecurities of people experiencing rapid social change in the developing world. Much of this work was given a stronger theoretical basis through the popularity of Erik Erikson's concept of individual and group identity. (In my research on why certain overseas Chinese in Malaya had turned to communism, I was not surprised to find that they had a strong need for belonging. My subsequent work on Burmese political culture was influenced by participation in a faculty seminar at MIT led by Erikson when he was finishing *Young Man Luther* and was developing his theory of identity crises in historical contexts.)

The problems of nation-building posed a double challenge for cultural analysis. The need was to try to understand both the psychology of cultural change basic to the general conditions of colonialism, nationalism and modernization; and secondly the particular problems of quite different traditional cultures adjusting to the world systems of politics and economics. An outstanding example of grappling with the first problem was O. Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban,* a sensitive study of the psychology of colonization. Dealing with the experiences of the people of Madagascar, Mannoni carefully traced the transition from a traditional society, in which everyone had a strong sense of belonging to a common heritage, to an early colonial arrangement, in which individuals found clearly defined niches in the new social structure. Some rejoiced in fully taking on European ways and becoming more European than the European colonialists. This was made easier because the colonizers tended to be lower-middle-class Europeans, and some upper-class "natives" were able to identify with the European upper-classes. (One is reminded of Jawaharlal Nehru's father, the successful lawyer, sending his shirts all the way to France to be laundered because the Indians couldn't get the starch right.) However, as more of the colonial people became educated and Westernized, the security of dependency gave way, and as

the cultural gap between Europeans and Africans narrowed, what remained was seen as only the product of discrimination. Independence brought out deep ambivalences as feelings of abandonment mixed with the peculiar combination of a superiority complex and an inferiority complex so common in transitional societies.

The universal patterns of psychological reactions to acculturation to modernity had to be understood as being modified by the distinctive characteristics of the particular traditional cultures. For example, the research of the psychologist G. Morris Carstairs (1957) provided scholars early on with penetrating insights into Hindu culture, which, given the Indian fascination with introspection, was soon followed by numerous studies by Indians themselves, ranging from essayists like Nirad Chaudhuri (1965), social scientists like Ashis Nandy (1980), to psychiatrists like Sudhir Kakas. The analyses which sought to combine both the universalistic and the particularistic dynamics of cultural change did in fact provide surprisingly accurate indications of the relative prospects for economic and political development of the various new states.

There were also ambitious efforts to combine bold theoretical formulation with quantifiable sociological measurements. Daniel Lerner in *The Passing of Traditional Society* developed an elegant theory about the key role of empathy in the modernization process and then sought to show a sequential path of development involving urbanization, literacy, communication, and political participation. In operationalizing his theory, he stimulated numerous studies which sought to confirm or otherwise advance his contributions.

SAMPLE SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWING

During these years another major development was taking place in the social sciences which gave political culture a dimension that the concept had not had in its original discipline. This was the emergence of sample survey techniques. There was now the possibility of measuring and quantifying attitudinal differences among demographically representative samples of populations, and this suggested the possibility that cultural differences could now be objectively defined and thus made more scientific. Stimulation of interest in the potential of surveys came from many developments, including Samuel Stouffer and his associates' demonstration during World War II in their massive study, *The American Soldier,* of the utility of surveys for attitudinal and behavioral research. Starting like a "fishing expedition" without the discipline of testing hypotheses, Stouffer came up with the significant discovery that communications tend to follow a "two-step flow" pattern—first, there are the few who make up the attentive public who pick out information from the mass media, and then, in the second "step," they pass it along by word of mouth to others through informal channels

of communications. Gabriel Almond (1950) advanced the theory further by showing that in public opinion on foreign policy issues, an "attentive" public followed events more closely and then personally informed the mass public of its knowledge. Katz and Lazerfeld (1955) then applied the theory to the study of voting behavior, where it held up well until the advent of television made it easier for the mass public to get information directly from the mass media. (It is surprising that someone has not developed the theory of the "three-step flow" of scholarly communications: In keeping up with our fields, some of us actually read the published works of others; others of us only read the reviews; and still others of us rely only upon gossip.)

It was significant that the classic study of political culture, Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture,* was a five-country study based on sample survey questionnaries. Almond had already demonstrated the potential of such an approach in his *Appeals of Communism.* What made *The Civic Culture* such a landmark work was not just its use of surveys, but more importantly, the surveys sought to operationalize a fundamental theory about the cultural basis of democracy. Almond and Verba postulated that democracy requires the existence of what they called a "civic culture," and then they set about to design questions which would test the extent to which different national populations had the attitudes essential for the "civic culture." Thus, their findings were not just ad hoc comparisons of items in random polling studies, but rather they constituted an attempt to determine how different populations compared according to a theory about the necessary attitudinal conditions for a stable democracy.

There were some criticisms that the Almond–Verba concept of a civic culture was too closely modeled on the norms of Anglo-Saxon democracy and that it failed to appreciate other possible forms of democracy, such as, for example, African one-party "democracies," with their ever-ruling heads of state. (At that time American intellectuals were extremely sensitive about being in any way ethnocentric, and this meant not being too possessive of the concept of democracy—some were even prepared to say that in its own way Stalin's Soviet Union had its democratic elements—and thus it was not thought outlandish to call African dictatorships "democracies.") From a later perspective, it is now clear that the original civic culture was not far off the mark in determining what is required for a stable democracy. Not only have the continental European systems moved steadily in the direction of the "civic culture" model, but also, in the current "transitions to democracy," such places as South Korea and Taiwan have seen a gradual strengthening of precisely those attitudes called for in the civic culture.

There were other pioneering efforts to use surveys to relate personality to political ideology. The most notable of these was the effort during World War II by Adorno and associates to measure what they termed the "authoritarian personality." Adorno's team sought to develop several scales for identifying the type of

rigid personality they associated with both right-wing authoritarianism and anti-Semitism. The attempt was not totally successful because their main "F-scale" seemed to measure indiscriminately both ideology and character, and therefore it was not clear whether they had in fact demonstrated that personality was determining ideology. The effort was also faulted by Edward Shils among others for its failure to recognize that authoritarian personalities are also to be found on the political left and not just on the right. Milton Rokeach (1960) helped to resolve this problem by empirically demonstrating that it is possible to identify people with either "open" or "closed" minds, and that people with "closed" minds are at both extremes of the political spectrum. (In the 1960s some American radicals denounced the contrast as just another form of status quo ideology, while others took pride in being "closed" minded as they rebuked liberals for being wishy-washy "open" minded people.)

The use of survey methods has continued, but the trend has shifted away from trying to delineate the total configurations of political cultures and moved toward greater precision with respect to specific themes. Sidney Verba and associates, for example, significantly advanced the use of surveys by concentrating national comparisons on more limited and precise features of political behavior, such as forms of participation in politics. Ronald Inglehart (1975, 1989) has helped to sustain comparative political culture work based on surveys by noting that, with greater affluence, the issues basic to politics in the advanced industrial nations have tended to revolve increasingly around cultural questions, and thus subtle attitudinal differences have become ever more significant.

Parallel to the development of survey research on cultural themes was the emergence of psychologically oriented interviewing by political scientists. The interest in the 1950s in the possible benefits of psychoanalytic insights no doubt contributed to the idea that interviewing while listening with a "third ear" might have great pay-offs for understanding political behavior. The idea was not to find "facts," as a journalist might, because memory is tricky, but to spot modes of reasoning, patterns of thinking about politics, notions of cause and effect, and to sense emotional peculiarities. Such research was furthered by the discovery that it was often easy to gain access to political leaders and influential figures in the newly independent countries.

As one who spent many years practicing this form of interviewing, I found that most Asian respondents enthusiastically welcomed the rare opportunity to reflect autobiographically about their early childhoods, their relations with their parents, siblings, teachers, and classmates. Their descriptions of their early joys and agonies, of how they went about making friendships and dealing with people they didn't like, of how they first became interested in politics, and of their thoughts about their political heroes and enemies generally provided a fairly clear picture of their political philosophies. Robert Lane was able to do much the same thing in his interviewing of various groups in New Haven.

ELITE POLITICAL CULTURES

The earliest work on political culture which was premised on national character did not distinguish between the orientations of political leaders and the common people; everyone was taken to be representative of a common national culture. The introduction of the concept of political socialization and, even more importantly, of political recruitment, helped establish the idea that societies have both mass and elite political cultures. While sample surveys might be appropriate for studying mass political cultures, and interviews might be possible for elites in some societies, in general the study of elite political cultures required more indirect techniques. At the very beginning of the behavioral revolution, and very much influenced by Lasswell, there were attempts to study individual political leaders from a psychological perspective, the best example being the classic study by Alexander and Juliette George (1956) of Woodrow Wilson. (There was a sharp divide in the intellectual path between those in political science who followed the lead of the Georges in working on the political psychology of individuals and those in other disciplines who became identified with the psycho-history school, which in it turn further fragmented into sects—much as happened with the early followers of Freud.) The challenge was how to move beyond the individual leader and to deal with political elites as a group. The problem called for the analysis of the social origins and career patterns of leaders, as was done in the Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool elite studies at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, and from reading between the lines of public statements, as was done in the early studies of the Soviet and Chinese Communist leaders.

Nathan Leites was possibly the leading pioneer in studying elites as a group. While working on the behavior of the Soviet elite, he developed the theory of the "operational code." He postulated that any well-established leadership group tended to develop a distinct style with respect to strategy and tactics. The processes of recruitment and self-selection would tend to ensure that like-minded people would move to top decision-making posts in any institution. Basing his work on thousands of quotations, Leites demonstrated in *A Study of Bolshevism* that the Soviet elite from Lenin through Stalin had developed approaches to strategy which were based on strongly ambivalent feelings about Western culture and a felt need to counter many negative tendencies in Russian national character.

Leites, as Daniel Bell (1958) insightfully noted, suggested that "character determines politics." For Leites the tactics and strategies people employ in politics are essentially the playing out of the defense mechanisms basic to the personalities of the individuals involved. Who is the enemy? Who is a friend? When to attack? When to retreat? What are the relationship of ends and means? Such questions, and a host of similar ones, make up the basic operational code of any political actor, and how they are answered is always a function of personality.

Leites added greatly to the study of political culture through his sensitivity to the importance of not just the dominant themes in childhood socialization, but also the counterthemes which people develop as reactions to their childhood experiences. His work on French politics stressed the constant balancing of the tension between adhering to and rejecting childhood experiences.

Although he was personally sophisticated in the philosophy of the social sciences, Leites resisted making explicit his theoretical and methodological approaches. He believed that in the social sciences all too often scholars left all their "scaffolding" in place after erecting their "buildings," and indeed at times it has been impossible even to see if there was really any "building" there at all because of all the methodological "scaffolding."

Although in general the study of elite political cultures does not lend itself to the same kind of quantitative analysis that is possible with mass political cultures, it has been possible in a few cases to use systematic written questionnaires for studying some political leadership groups. Robert Putnam (1973) was, for example, able to use statistical measures in comparing the ideological orientation of British and Italian politicians. In most studies of leaders, however, the ideas and attitudes are too subtle and complex to be captured by questionnaires. What is called for is more qualitative interpretations, based on extensive firsthand knowledge about the elite culture. It would be wrong, however, to say that such knowledge is only "impressionistic" or "intuitive." A well-trained, experienced scholar is in many respects a more precise and finely tuned "instrument" for measuring political predispositions than the crude and simplistic questions in surveys, which can only identify gross distinctions. There are simply no "scientific" instruments as good as the skilled human being for the truly refined measuring called for in, say, wine tasting or in evaluating the performance of those practicing the art of politics.

AN ERA OF BOLD THEORY-BUILDING ENDS

By the 1960s there was a sharp decline in both political culture studies and in bold empirical theorizing about social and political developments. Ideological position-taking and moralizing replaced positivistic theory-building. The contrast, for example, in the analysis of American society has been dramatic. During the era of bold ideas there were a host of interpretations about American society. David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* postulated the transition from "inner directed" to "other directed" personalities; Margaret Mead's *Keep Your Powder Dry* sought to explain the peculiar American emphasis upon a presumed contradiction between moralism and realism; David Potter's *People of Plenty* spoke to the American response to abundance even before John Kenneth Galbraith popu-

larized the idea of an affluent society; Daniel Bell produced a series of analyses that led up to his theory about the cultural contradictions of capitalism; and Louis Hartz (1955) was explaining the nondevelopment of socialism in America. Yet as American society is confronted with new pathologies, such as the spread of drugs and the rise in violent crimes, there has been no shortage of moralizing and finger-pointing but few if any striking theories for explaining how drug addiction can have become a national problem at the very time Americans are obsessed with health, giving up smoking, food fads and exercise, and worried about the dangers of pollution in the atmosphere and damage to the environment. The response to the problems has been less intellectual and more fueled by mood and anger.

The loss of intellectual vitality has been most dramatic in anthropology, the discipline that once led the way in "exporting" bold ideas, but which now creates few waves that spill over and affect the other disciplines. Clifford Geertz (1973) became a leader in suggesting that most of the theory-building about culture had been based on sloppy and inconsistent definitions of the town. He noted that Kluckhohn had used at least eleven different definitions of culture in 27 pages of *Mirror for Man*. He called for a return to detailed ethnographical reporting, greater care about imposing Western concepts—and especially the arrogance of "science"—on foreign cultures, and greater sensitivity in searching for the "meaning" behind actions, which he insisted was the essence of culture. The ideal in the discipline became "thick description" and not theory-building. (The concept of "thick description" has been widely associated with Clifford Geertz, who certainly popularized it, but it should be recognized that Geertz made it clear that the term originated with Gilbert Ryle.) There has, however, been some resistance. Ernest Gellner sees a "crisis of faith" in anthropology which stems from an antintellectual school of hermeneutics which proclaims that it is a form of Western imperialism to apply any rigorous theories to other cultures, and that "clarity is some kind of intellectual treason" (Gellner, 1988, p. 302). Richard A. Shweder, responding to the same problem of a crisis of faith in anthropology, has suggested that the discipline is "in need of a farm subsidy program for Western intellectuals: to avoid flooding the market with ideas, pay them not to think" (Shweder, 1988).

The intellectual mood by the late 1960s was thus increasingly hostile to theories about culture. At the beginning of that decade David Riesman and Nathan Glazer observed that culture and personality research had "more critics . . . than practitioners" (cited in Greenstein, 1975, p. 33). Unquestionably some of the problems can be traced directly to practices and excesses of those working with political culture theory. In fact, right from the beginning anyone who wanted to be a critic would have had an easy time, because most practitioners have been quite open in acknowledging the existence of methodological

problems. Fred Greenstein (1975), for example, went to great lengths to meet more than halfway the critics of political psychology, and he showed great respect for the argument that personality might not be an important factor in politics. However, given the manifest contrasts in style and performance of presidents Truman and Eisenhower, of Kennedy and Johnson, of Carter and Reagan, one would have thought that the monkey should have been on the back of those who insist that "structure" and organization theory can explain all and that personality can be ignored.

In the same spirit of not covering over problems, Sidney Verba (1965) graciously acknowledged that culture is often treated as the explanation of last resort: if there is no other way of accounting for differences, then just say these are due to culture. But this, of course, can be turned around to make, say, rationality the explanation of last resort; for as Abba Eban has noted, "Men and nations behave rationally and wisely only after they have exhausted all the alternatives." That being the case, then we should properly employ assumptions about rationality only after exhausting all other possible interpretations, including cultural ones. (In a more philosophical vein, it needs to be noted that the concept of rationality can lead to forms of circular reasoning that are as bad as the cultural approach is said to be. With rationality the analyst assumes that it is possible to know the purpose or motives of the actor and then to judge whether the relationship between purpose and action "makes sense." But of course in politics motives and purposes are usually masked, and as Lasswell taught us, even the politician may not know what his or her "real" motives are, and what politicians say needs to be seen usually as "mere rhetoric." To deduce from manifest actions what "makes sense" purposively is of course post hoc proper hoc circular reasoning. A great deal thus depends upon the ascribing of motives by the analyst. For example, if one says that Mao Zedong's purpose was to build a strong socialist China then it would have to be said that most of his actions did not "make sense" and thus he was "irrational," for he left China in a state of near collapse. On the other hand, if we posit that Mao from 1957 on was working covertly for the CIA then everything he did "makes sense," in that he clashed with the U.S.S.R., broke up the unity of the communist world, destroyed the Chinese Communist Party in the Cultural Revolution, kept China out of the Vietnam war, and welcomed President Nixon to Beijing while the U.S. was still fighting Hanoi. But of course it is absurd to believe that this could have been the case—all of which shows how tricky "making sense" by using the concept of rationality can be. The moral is that with both culture and rationality it is necessary to use "good judgment," something that may be hard to define, but which can be easily recognized when one sees it.)

There have, however, been manifest failings in political culture research which justify some of the criticisms. Often it seemed that research goals got

reversed, and that instead of culture and personality being used to deepen our understanding of political behavior, they have been used for making polemical political points. Some of the practitioners of the psycho-history movement have, for example, played rather fast and loose with the jargon, if not the concepts, of psychoanalysis to discredit public figures for partisan purposes. Political culture was thus tarnished in being identified with some questionable psychologically oriented studies. This became even more a danger after the Kuhnian revolution, which introduced the concept of paradigms to political science. The concept seem to legitimize the stereotyping of whole categories of research approaches without independently evaluating the particular worth of individual studies.

The more aggressive attacks on political culture reached a peak in the late 1960s and 1970s, and they came from both the political left and the right. At that time the popular theory of dependency for explaining Third World developments held that culture was irrelevant because the key factor in national development was the world capitalist system, with its industrialized "center" dominating and exploiting the "periphery." It may not be hard to understand the popularity of dependency theory for South American intellectuals, given the Latin American tradition of magical realism in literature in which fact and fantasy are blurred and there is a general suspension of disbelief. It is more of a mystery why North American scholars, committed to empirical research, should have taken to the theory at the very time in history when capital was flowing into the Third World, and when cultural differences so obviously explained why the Latin Americans ended up with huge debts, and little to show for their borrowing, while in the Confucian culture area the borrowing produced industrial might. (And no doubt the same factors may explain why it is the Confucian Leninist states of China, North Korea and Vietnam that are the most stubborn in resisting the "death of Communism.") By the 1980s, however, Robert Packenham among others had shown that all versions of the dependency theory were Leninist dogma. Above all, the opening of China and the "end of Communism" in Europe revealed that the decades of communist rule had not obliterated the different national cultures nor produced societies of "new socialist men."

The attack on political culture from the right came in two forms. First, from the rational choice perspective, it was argued that cultural predisposition among, say, peasants cannot stand up to self-interest, rationally defined (Popkin, 1979). Rational choice does not, however, have to be in an either/or relationship with culture, since as Wildavsky (1987) has shown, the utility functions of those making decisions are culturally determined. Second, there was the hard-nosed methodological attack which at times came down to nit-picking arguments about quantitative methods. Such attacks have not, however, provided any happy solutions because they called for methodological standards which generally produce only unexciting answers to trivial problems.

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD IDEA DOWN

Political culture now seems to be returning to center stage, although in a less exuberant form. Samuel P. Huntington (1981) has shown that the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s represented less a challenge to American political culture and more a playing out of the "disharmonies" inherent in the American "creed." Bruce Jentleson (1990) has demonstrated that personality considerations and organizational theory need not be seen as competing and mutually exclusive explanations in foreign-policy-making. And as I just noted, Aaron Wildavsky (1987) makes the point that there need not be a conflict between the culture approach and rational choice theory because the preferences of the actors are culturally determined.

Moreover, in the "post-cold-war" world we are already seeing a revival of ethnic and nationality differences which testify to the importance of cultural factors. As the Marxist-Leninist leaders relearn the cardinal political rule that persistence in failure is a dangerous thing, they have had to allow ethnic and other cultural realities to reemerge as significant political realities. The "end of (dogmatic) ideology" has opened the way for cultural predispositions to become the bases for group identities.

In the decade ahead there will be several major problems in foreign affairs which, as in the 1940s and 50s, would seem to call for cultural interpretations. A problem near the top of the agenda for political science is, for example, a better understanding of the "transitions toward democracy" which seems to be currently sweeping much of the world. We need to answer the questions of what the cultural bases for democracy may be in the context of modernizing economies. There is also the question of why some countries have had far greater success than others in raising the living standards of their people. Lawrence Harrison (1988) has shown how Latin American cultural predispositions have been obstacles for economic development, while Peter Berger (1987) has explored how the Confucian culture areas have benefited economically from features of that traditional culture. The economic successes of Japan and the "four little dragons" have accentuated the importance of considering culture as one important variable in understanding the process of modernization.

Indeed, as the world moves beyond the Cold War and economic considerations begin to bulk larger in world politics, there is certain to be increased interest in the significance of cultural differences. The need today for more Americans to appreciate cultural differences in order for the United States to be more competitive in the world economy is somewhat comparable to the need in the 1950s for a similar understanding of foreign cultures for the purposes of American leadership in national security terms.

The question for the future is whether it will be possible to capture the intellectual power behind the culture and personality idea at a time when the

exuberance of its first discovery is now clearly out of place. A more tamed version of the theory, one that aspires to be only a collaborator with other approaches, can still offer a great deal of help for political research. Yet if future generations of scholars are to get the full benefits of the approach, it may be necessary for them to go back and actually read the pioneering works. They will find much that can be safely ignored but also much that may be very stimulating, especially at a time when much of current research seems to be rather anemic with respect to theoretical ideas. The pendulum appears to be swinging away from description and back toward a search for the elegance of bold theory. In all likelihood, the future swings will not be as extreme as those in the past, which means that culture will not be as exorbitantly praised or as viciously damned as it has been; and therefore it will have won a secure and enduring place in social science research.

REFERENCES

Almond, G., and Verba, S. (1963). *The civic culture,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Almond, G. (1954). *The appeals of communism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Arendt, H. (1951). *The origins of totalitarianism.*

Bell, D. (1958). Ten theories in search of reality: The prediction of Soviet behavior. *World Politics,* April.

Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of culture.* Boston: Haughton Mifflin.

Benedict, R. (1946). *The chrysanthemum and the sword.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Berger, P., and Hsiao, H. H. (Eds.) (1987). *In search of an East Asian development model.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions Publisher.

Carstairs, G. M. (1957). *The twice-born: A study of a community of high-caste Hindus.* London: Hogarth.

Chadhuri, N. C. (1965). *The continent of Circe.* Bombay: Jaico.

Deutsch, K. (1963). *The nerves of government.* New York: Free Press.

Dicks, H. V. (1952). Observations on contemporary Russian behavior. *Human Relations, V*(2).

Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from freedom.* New York: Farrar and Rinehart.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

Gellner, E. (1988). The politics of anthropology. *Government and Opposition, 23L,* 290–303.

Gorer, G., and Rickman, J. (1949). *The people of great Russia.* London: Groset.

Greenstein, F. I. (1975). *Personality and politics.* New York: Norton.

Harrison, L. (1988). *Underdevelopment is a state of mind: The Latin American case.* Lanham, MD: U. Press of America.

Hartz, L. (1955). *Liberal political tradition in America.* New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Hoffmann, S., et al. (1963). *In search of France.* Cambridge: *Harvard University* Press.

Huntington, S. P. (1981). *American politics: The promise of disharmony.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1975). *The silent revolution: Changing values and political style among western publics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1989). *Changing culture.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inkeles, A., and Levinson, D. J. (1954). National character. In G. Lindzey, (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology.* Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.

Jentleson, B. (1990). Discrepant responses to falling dictators: Presidential belief systems and the mediating effects of the senior advisory process. *Political Psychology, 11*(2).

Kardiner, A. (1945). *Psychological frontiers of society.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Kluckholm, C. (1991). *Mirror for Man.*

Lasswell, H. D. (1930). *Psychopathology and politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leites, N. (1953). *A study of Bolshevism.* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Leites, N. (1959). *On the game of politics in France.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Leites, N. (1966). *The rules of the game in Paris.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society.* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Linton, R. (1945). *The cultural background of personality.* New York: Appleton–Century–Crofts.

Mannoni, O. (1950). *Prospero and Caliban.* New York: Praeger.

Mead, M. (1942). *And Keep Your Powder Dry.* New York: William Morrow.

Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of age in Samoa.* New York: William Morrow.

McClelland, D. et al. (1953). The *Achievement motive.* New York: Appleton–Century–Crofts.

Nandy, A. (1980). *At the edge of psychology.* Bombay: Oxford University Press.

Parsons, T., and Shils, E. (Eds.) (1952). *Toward a general theory of action.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Popkin, S. (1979). *The rational peasant.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Potter, D. M. (1954). *People of plenty.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Putnam, R. (1973). *The beliefs of politicians.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Riesman, D. (1950). *The lonely crowd: A study of the changing American character.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rockeach, M. (1960). *The open and closed mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Shweder, R. (1988). The how of the word. *New York Times Book Review.* 28 February.

Stouffer, S. et al. (1991). *The American soldier.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Verba, S. (1965). Conclusion: Comparative political culture. In L. Pye and S. Verba (Eds.), *Political culture and political development.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Whiting, J. W. M., and Child, I. (1953). *Child training and personality.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wildavsky, A. (1987). Choosing preferences by constructing institutions: A cultural theory of preference formation. *American Political Science Review, 81,* 3–21.

Wylie, L. (1991). *A Village in the Vancluse.*