

17.50, Introduction to Comparative Politics (Fall 2006)
Prof. Chappell Lawson
Session 6: Culture

Definition of **culture**

- a. Ideas and beliefs, inside your head, values, norms about how you should behave and beliefs about how you will be judged that guide your actions
- b. Very common in popular press

Examples

1. Mexico: Interpersonal trust and silver jewelry
2. Mexico: Cabinet making post-NAFTA
3. Germany: Law abidingness; Speed limits; tell this to someone in Brazil
4. Why does Japan not have nuclear weapons? Strong logic that they should; huge domestic opposition to the idea; just a norm at both mass and elite levels
5. Russia and tolerance: See below
6. Argentina vs. Uruguay: See below

Some anecdotal evidence:

- Cuba in 1930s
 - Corruption
 - Gangs
 - Everyone an activist
 - Political culture of the gun and of corruption
 - Failed democracy
- Argentina vs. Uruguay
 - Argentina
 - legacy primarily of one man (Juan Perón)
 - political atmosphere: everyone hated each other
 - Uruguay
 - Very similar to Argentina (in demographics, economy, history) but political culture nonetheless totally different
 - People in Uruguayan capital talk to each other, get along, cut deals as necessary
 - Argentine politics more volatile and unstable; Uruguay more consolidated democracy, shared norms of political competition
- Russia
 - Support for democracy hasn't changed since the collapse of Soviet Union
 - Persistent and pervasive intolerance of disliked/minority groups (not simply result of education or economic/political crises)
 - Seems to affect politics: elites take cues and it influences official treatment of opposition groups or minorities

More recently, a continuation of cross-national statistical research, with increasing rigor

- World Values Survey and Iglehardt
- Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer

Bad cultural studies:

- c. National character of Germany & Japan in World War II

d. Huntington: *Clash of Civilizations*

Problems with cultural explanations

- Endogeneity
- How to measure

Measurement

- What would you do?
- How would you design a survey?
- Other methods

Dimensions of political culture

- Mass beliefs
- Elite beliefs (elites are, of course, just one subculture)

Where does political culture come from?

- Putnam: very old historical legacies dating back to period of enervating authoritarian rule
- Particular crises or leaders

How does culture change?

- Generational change and cohort replacement
- Crises
- Institutions
- Exposure to foreign models
- Leaders

Putnam's Second argument

- Transformismo
- Extremists lose
- What happens to local notables?
- What happens at national level?
- Alternative explanations for change at regional level: Not a matter of cohort replacement or what mass public feels