



CHAPTER 13

Political Culture

This chapter presents some of the ideas and objectives behind the concept of political culture, particularly as they appear in the work of Almond and Verba. It then examines some of the problems that have arisen in applying it. A case study of Russia illustrates the difficulty of establishing exactly how political culture influences political change. The chapter then argues that despite these problems, political culture remains an important field of study in political science. The chapter concludes by suggesting a more realistic approach to political culture that takes into account the centrality of institutions in political life and the multiplicity of political cultures that may influence the political climate in any particular nation.

Chapter Outline

- **Civic Culture and Political Culture**
- **Challenges to the Concept of Political Culture**
 1. Identifying a Homogenous National Political Culture
 2. Identifying Causal Linkages between Attitudes and Political Outcomes
 3. The State May Shape Political Culture to Its Own Ends
 4. The Impact of Globalization
 5. Political Culture Is Used to Explain Why Change Cannot Happen
- **The Persisting Significance of Political Culture**
- **Conclusion**

Key Terms

Amoral familism
Constructivism
Enlightenment
Ethno-symbolism

Globalization
Nationalism
Political culture
Polyarchy

Rule of law
Social capital
Welfare state

Discussion Questions

1. According to Almond and Verba, what are the three attitudes towards politics, and what is the appropriate combination of them for a democracy? Is there just one possible combination?
2. How is globalization impacting traditional understandings of political culture? Does the rise of globalization mean the death of specific political culture?
3. How would you characterize the political culture of Canada today? In what ways is it different than it was 10 years ago? 20 years ago? 100 years ago?
4. Does the political culture of a given population shape the state, or does the state shape political culture, or perhaps, is something else going on?
5. It has been argued that political culture is a necessary component of a national identity. If this is the case, then what does it mean to be a Canadian?
6. Can we apply Almond and Verba's ideas to young people and their political participation?

Further Resources

- http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Fperson=4007&Itemid=28
The Online Library of Liberty page on Alexis de Tocqueville
- <http://www.citizenshandbook.org/>
A resource page for those interested in activism—A number of links relevant to the issue of civic culture are found under the heading “New Ways of Governing”
- <http://www.bjp.org/>
Home page of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—Its platform of “Hindu-ness” is outlined in the section on party philosophy
- http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm
European Commission page on European Culture

- <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-marketing/what-does-it-mean-to-be-canadian/article30697153/>
What does it mean to be Canadian?
- <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/celebrate/reflection.asp>
What Canada Means to Me
- Dalton, R. (2015). *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, Calif: CQ Press.
- Weisband, E and C. Thomas. (2014). *Political Culture and the Making of the Modern Nation-States*. NY: Routledge.