

# **Political Culture and Political Socialization** (I-III revised from an unknown source, but likely to be an outline of chapter 3 from Almond, Gabriel, G. Bingham Powell, Kaare Strom, Russell J. Dalton. Eds. 2008. *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*. Pearson Longman.)

## **I. Political Culture – Citizens orientations toward the political system, political and policymaking process and policy outputs and outcomes (or the distribution of orientations toward political objects)**

1. Three levels of political culture:
  - a. System level – citizens’ and leaders’ views of values and organizations holding the system together
    - (1) draws on the basic commitments to the political system
    - (2) common identity – patriotism, national pride
    - (3) legitimacy provides foundation – citizens “ought to obey” that arises from:
      - (a) results from the political, social ,and economic systems
      - (b) habit
      - (c) historical, religious, ethnic identity
      - (d) accepted procedures
  - b. Process level – expectations of how politics should function and individual’s relationship to the political process
    - (1) What do we expect out of government?
      - (a) Parochial culture – limited awareness, expectations, and participation –
      - (b) Subject culture – higher awareness, expectations, and participation – focused on output of the system
      - (c) Participant culture – higher still awareness, expectations, and participation – focused on inputs to and outputs from the system
  - c. Policy level – citizens and leaders policy expectations from the government.
    - (1) Policy expectations
    - (2) Expectations of Government Process
2. Consensus and Conflict
  - a. Consensual – citizens tend to agree on decisionmaking process and major problems facing society
  - b. Conflictual – deep, persistent divisions across political attitudes exist
    - (1) distinct political subcultures may emerge as a result
    - (2) so distinctive that agents/types of socialization may differ as well, as in Russia today
    - (3) when political subculture coincides with ethnic, national or religious differences – divisions can be threatening to stability of society

## II. Political Socialization – The process by which we acquire of beliefs, values and attitudes about a particular political system (our own, usually)

1. Direct and indirect processes of learning
  - a. Direct: explicit communication of information, values, feelings toward politics ex: civic courses; indoctrination programs (Taliban)
  - b. Indirect: inadvertent molding of political views by life experiences
    - (1) End of the Cold War
    - (2) 9/11
    - (3) World economic crisis
  
2. Continue throughout life – childhood foundation plus the rest of your life
  - a. life-cycle of the individual
  - b. effects of the period in which one lives
  - c. influence of events on a specific group of individuals
  
3. Social groups w/own sources of news, own sources of culture separate selves from larger society
  
4. Agents
  - a. Family
  - b. School
  - c. Religious Institutions
  - d. Peer Groups
  - e. Social Class and Gender
  - f. Mass Media
  - g. Interest Groups
  - h. Political parties
  - i. Direct contact with the governmental
  
5. Some contemporary political socialization factors
  - a. Result of **similar environmental conditions** and exposure to the **same historic events** => create a trend that may take political culture into a slightly different realm than we would expect given regular processes of socialization.
  - b. Examples of some current trends:
    - (1) Modernization – secularizing effect of science, control over nature (its not a message from God, its an eclipse). This process can be disruptive for traditional societies.
    - (2) Post-industrialization – a byproduct of modernization – people who have come of age in a period of prosperity are less concerned with the achievement and maintenance of wealth – they assume it as a constant.
    - (3) Post-material values: equality, environmental protection (tree dwellers), self-expression, cultural pluralism
    - (4) Ethnicity resurgence – demand for equality or independence
    - (5) Democratization. Trend toward democracy an outcome of both

modernization and current events. People more critical of functioning of democracy (trust in government). Self-Determination – people still supportive of democracy.

(6) Marketization – Greater acceptance of free markets and private profit. Less governmental management of economies (China, Eastern Europe, Soviet Union).

**III. Conclusion: political culture and socialization are dynamic; not static phenomena.**

**IV. What people think and how they come to think it is of critical importance to the stability and health of popular government. The beliefs and values of the people are the basis for a society's political culture and that culture defines the parameters of political life and governmental action.**