Cultural change in Asia and beyond: From allegiant to assertive citizens

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Abstract
In their classic, The Civic Culture, Almond and Verba (1963) define the ideal democratic citizen as an allegiant, trustful, and modestly participatory person. This ideal has shaped how scholars think about consolidated democracies as well the process of democratic development. In contrast, we argue that a new model of assertive citizenship spreads as nations experience social modernization, and that these new norms have potentially positive consequences for government performance. We replicate earlier analyses by Welzel and Dalton (2014) using the new sixth wave of the World Values Survey. Our results broadly confirm the earlier findings on the shift toward a more assertive model of citizenship and the consequences of this shift in producing more effective and accountable governments.

Keywords
democratization, government performance, political culture, value change, World Values Survey

Two historic processes are transforming large portions of East Asia. The first process is the region’s economic rise: most societies in the region are rapidly closing the economic gap between themselves and affluent Western societies. As recently as 1970, some of the now prospering East Asian nations had income levels comparable to poor African nations. In the past two decades, the region has experienced an average annual GDP growth rate of nearly 8 percent. In overall terms, the economic transformation of East Asia has been nothing short of miraculous. Living conditions
in many nations are now several times better than a generation ago. There are high literacy rates in most nations of the region, as well as increased access to information, and a globalized economy is increasing exposure to international norms. From Ho Chi Minh City to Seoul, people today enjoy a lifestyle and life chances that are far removed from those of their grandparents. These economic changes are the most visible signs of a general process of social modernization in the region.

The second transformation is Asia’s participation in the third wave of democratization. The 1986 “people power” revolution swept away the Marcos regime in the Philippines and recreated a democratic system of government. Taiwan and South Korea soon after experienced democratic transitions, and Mongolia made a rapid transition in the early 1990s. In 1998 public demonstrations brought an end to Suharto’s rule, charting Indonesia on a new democratic course. Nepal and Myanmar have progressed in recent years, as Thailand has regressed. This trend has produced a major change in the political rights and life chances of the people in many Asian nations—but it, too, is an incomplete process, since half the nations in the region remain non-democratic or only partly free.

Many experts maintain that these two trends are interrelated (Diamond, 2003; Murtin and Wacziarg, 2014). The social modernization literature has long argued that economic development encourages democratic development (Lipset, 1981). Increased living standards, a more complex economy, increased literacy, and integration into the global system should eventually promote democratization across Asia if the modernization thesis is correct. One important element of this process is cultural change—the transition in citizen values from those of a subject in an authoritarian state to an assertive participant in the social and political decisions affecting their lives (Inglehart, 1990; Welzel, 2013).

However, other analysts argue that Asian cultural traditions may lead to different trajectories. Experts regularly offer Confucianism and “Asian values” as reasons for the region’s delayed democratic development (Lee, 1994; cf. Chu et al., 2008). The adherence to traditional authority structures, paternalistic norms, and the rejection of individualism are sometimes cited as factors restricting the development of democracy. Lee Kuan Yew’s and Mahathir Mohamad’s polemic statements on these points were widely cited in the popular and elite press, but academic scholars have offered more nuanced versions of this same logic (Bell, 2006; Huntington, 1996; Pye, 1999; Dalton and Shin, 2006; Shi, 2014; Shin, 2012).

This article builds on our recent cross-national study of changing political cultures (Dalton and Welzel, 2014). We use the newest sixth wave of the World Values Survey (WVS) to replicate the study’s two theorized patterns of political culture—an allegiant and an assertive orientation—and describe how these orientations are distributed across nations. Then we link these cultural orientations to two distinct aspects of governmental performance: accountable and effective governance. Finally, we consider what this evidence says about the role of political culture in supporting democratic development in Asian societies.

The political culture thesis

The classic political culture studies provided a normative model of the cultural foundations of a stable democracy as presented in Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s *The Civic Culture* (1963) and in Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba’s *Political Culture and Political Development* (1965). The importance of these two classics cannot be overemphasized. They widened the political culture approach into a framework for the comparative analysis of political change and regime legitimacy in developed as well as developing countries. The guiding question of the Almond/Verba/Pye
approach was “What citizen beliefs make democratic regimes survive and flourish?” With the expansion of democracy into new global regions during the third wave of democratization, this “civicness question” is still very relevant today.

Almond and his colleagues stressed a cluster of orientations that supposedly supported a democratic polity: allegiance to the system based on support for democracy, confidence in institutions, social norm compliance, trust in one’s fellow citizens, and political interest focused on government outputs but with little participation beyond electoral politics. This allegiant model was most apparent in the United States and Britain, the two mature democracies in their study—and lacking in democratizing nations.

However, the modern wave of cross-national political culture research offers another answer to the question of what citizen beliefs are congruent with democracy. Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues have stressed a shift in the cultural foundations of established democracies that conflicts with the normative model of The Civic Culture (Inglehart, 1990, 2000; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). This research argues that contemporary publics are developing more assertive, self-expressive values that contrast with the allegiant values of the Civic Culture model, thus changing the nature of democratic citizenship. Instead of an allegiant and deferential public, established democracies now have more critical citizens (Dalton, 2004; Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999). In addition, the populist expansion of democracy during its third wave speaks to a democratic potential that the scholarly community had often overlooked. People power movements in mature as well as emerging democracies—from the Philippines to Taiwan to Indonesia—demonstrate a popular desire for political change that appears inconsistent with the Civic Culture model in a double sense: rising assertive orientations are compatible with democracy and actually revitalize it; and they often initiate the demise of authoritarian regimes.

Advocates of the “Asian values thesis” argue that East Asia’s Confucian tradition makes the region immune to the emancipatory consequences of the modernization process, as they are known from the West (Bomhoff and Gu, 2011). Against these claims, Welzel (2011, 2012) demonstrated that expanding education and mass communication give rise to assertive orientations in Asia, and in East Asia especially. Moreover, rising assertive orientations reshape the ways in which people in Asia as elsewhere understand democracy, making popular notions of democracy more liberal. Rising assertive orientations also motivate nonviolent protest activity in Asia as elsewhere. In that sense, Asian societies are not exempted from the emancipatory impulses of the modernization process.

Our edited book discussed the decline of deferential and allegiant attitudes in citizens of most democracies and a concomitant rise in elite-challenging norms and patterns of political participation (Dalton and Welzel, 2014). We examined this contrast by using the third to fifth waves of the WVS to develop measures of traditional allegiant norms and new assertive norms. We plotted the cross-national distribution of these values, and their apparent longitudinal trends, extrapolating from generational differences. These two cultural norms were then linked to governmental performance, with striking results. While allegiant values showed a modest correlation with the effectiveness of government, there was no relationship with the accountability of government. In contrast, assertive values appeared to strongly stimulate both effective and accountable government.

We argued that allegiant and assertive values have broad contrasting implications for contemporary societies. For example, this research suggests that the decline of allegiant values does not represent a threat to contemporary democracies as many analysts have claimed. Conversely, the rise of assertive values may have benefits for the quality of governance that override the contention and skepticism identified with these orientations.
This article replicates our earlier analyses by extending the evidence into the newest sixth wave of the WVS, as well as tracking some trends with the set of WVS nations surveyed over time. The results should determine whether the findings and conclusions from Welzel and Dalton (2014) are robust. Based on the findings, we can better project the impact of cultural change in East Asia and other democratizing societies.

**Measuring allegiant and assertive orientations**

Our analyses use a new wave of data from WVS. The WVS began in the early 1980s as an expansion of the European Values Study. Building on a common core questionnaire, independent principal investigators obtain funding for the survey in their nation or in collaboration with other nations. Now in its sixth wave, the WVS is a unique data source in terms of its spatial and temporal scope. The project has surveyed more than a hundred societies that represent more than 90 percent of the world population.

We use the questions available in the most recent sixth wave of the WVS to replicate the earlier Welzel and Dalton (2014) study of political cultures. The goal is to capture the essence of the political norms that Almond and Verba (1963) identified with a civic culture. Thus, we closely follow their model and operationalize what they described as an allegiant political culture: orientations that tie citizens loyally to their society and its institutional order. The WVS has three manifestations of such allegiant orientations:

- **Institutional confidence**: people have confidence in the institutions that constitute the pillars of state order, including the courts, the police, and the army.
- **Philanthropic faith**: people trust in others, believe in democracy, and are interested in politics.
- **Norm compliance**: people abide by the laws and are critical of violations, such as taking bribes, avoiding tax payments, and cheating on state benefits.

Conversely, we replicated a measure of assertive orientations as norms that encourage people to be rights-conscious and to voice their concerns. Such orientations coincide with what Welzel (2013) calls emancipative values, combining libertarian, egalitarian, and expressive views, involving an emphasis on “individual liberties,” “equal opportunities,” and “people’s voice”. These priorities make people sensitive to their rights and to those of others, make them upset about rights violations, and encourage them to voice their opinions through collective action. We measure these three elements of assertive orientations in the following way:

- **Individual liberties**: the belief that people should be free in deciding how to live their lives, which includes the freedom to divorce an unloved partner, to abort an unintended pregnancy, and to follow a homosexual orientation.
- **Equal opportunities**: the belief that group differences, including most notably gender differences, do not justify unequal opportunities in access to education, jobs, and politics.
- **Democratic voice**: the belief that people should have a voice in collective decisions on various levels, so that these decisions reflect what most people want.

Bomhoff and Gu (2012) claim that these kinds of orientations are inherently Western, implying that looking for such orientations in Asia is measuring the region against an alien standard. Contradicting this claim, Welzel (2012, 2013) has shown that assertive orientations are the
outcome of modernization and, consequently, are rising wherever modernization advances, including Asia.

Eighteen items in the WVS fit the concepts of allegiant and assertive orientations, with nine items for each of these two overarching norms. Table 1 displays these items, together with factor loadings from hierarchical factor analyses of the country-pooled, individual-level data, as in Welzel and Dalton (2014).

We are not implying that the dimensionality in the pooled data repeats itself in a similar fashion in each national sample. As Welzel and Inglehart (2016) demonstrate, this is an altogether unnecessary requirement for constructs whose elements are combined on strong theoretical terms. As these authors show, for a combination to be consequential, its elements do not need to be interchangeable (quite the contrary in fact), nor has their dimensional association to be the same everywhere. Our concepts of allegiance and assertion fall precisely into this category of “combinatory” constructs. The proof of their usefulness lies in predictiveness rather than internal coherence in individual-level dimensional analyses.

Accordingly, our calculation of allegiance and assertion indices proceeds in two steps. First, we average groups of three items each to yield six sub-indices, three for allegiance (institutional confidence, philanthropic faith, norm compliance) and another three for assertion (individual liberties, equal opportunities, democratic voice). Second, we average the three allegiant and the three assertive sub-indices into the overall indices for allegiance and assertion, in accord with the definition and measurement of these two cultures in Welzel and Dalton (2014).

Table 1. Measuring allegiant culture and assertive cultures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>L1 loadings</th>
<th>Subconstructs</th>
<th>L2 loadings</th>
<th>Overall Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in the courts</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Institutional confidence</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>ALLEGIANT CULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in the police</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in the army</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in democracy</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in people</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Philanthropic faith</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing bribe taking</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing benefit cheating</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Norm compliance</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing tax evasion</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of abortion</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of divorce</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Individual liberties</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of homosexuality</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s equality: Politics</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s equality: Education</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s equality: Jobs</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority more say: Local</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority more say: National</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Democratic voice</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of speech</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results are from a two-stage, hierarchical factor analysis using the pooled individual-level data set of WVS waves III–V, weighting national samples to equal size (N = 1000 per sample). The number of respondents is about 95,000 in 92 countries.

Source: World Values Survey, most recent survey of each society.
Describing allegiant and assertive orientations

Government institutions only exist at the aggregate level, and therefore individual orientations only affect institutions by their aggregate configuration. Likewise, “culture” is not an individual attribute, but is a collective property that represents the *aggregate* of all individual orientations in a nation. Thus, we measure the strength of allegiant and assertive “cultures” by calculating how prevalent these orientations are in each society. The key question is how the prevalence of allegiant and assertive orientations in a society’s political culture relates to its governance performance. Moreover, individual-level orientations change meaning when considered in the aggregate: now they measure the strength of allegiance and assertion as a social norm, rather than an individual preference.

We computed national mean scores on allegiant and assertive orientations for 106 societies, using the latest WVS sample for each society (Figure 1). Although the calculation of the two orientations did not statistically constrain their relationship, they are essentially uncorrelated ($r = 0.00$ at the aggregate level across 106 nations). Thus allegiant and assertive orientations are not necessarily antipodes; they exist independently of each other. Because of this dimensional independence, these two political culture orientations may affect governance performance in distinct ways.

Figure 1. Allegiant and assertive norms by nation.
This figure plots every nation ever surveyed by the WVS, always using data from the latest available survey only. The time points vary mostly between 2000 and 2012.

Describing allegiant and assertive orientations
National experiences span all four quadrants of Figure 1, implying different cultural mixes. For instance, a combination of strong allegiant norms with weak assertive norms in the lower right quadrant characterizes several less affluent and less democratic East and Southeast Asian nations: China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, as well as developing nations in other regions. This pattern might reflect the heritage of Confucian traditions and general deference to authority in these nations. The more affluent nations of East Asia tend to be located closer to the average on both dimensions (Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan). The combination of weak allegiant norms with weak assertive norms in the lower left quadrant is common in the post-Soviet world and several African nations. In the upper left quadrant, combining weak allegiant norms with strong assertive norms, we find France, Argentina, Slovenia, and other traditionally Catholic societies that have relatively high levels of economic development. Finally, the combination of strong allegiant norms with strong assertive norms in the upper right characterizes the Scandinavian countries and other postindustrial democracies that are historically Protestant.

To illustrate the patterns across large global regions, Figure 2 combines societies into the 10 culture zones defined by Welzel (2013). These 10 culture zones account for 38 percent of the entire cross-national variance in allegiant norms and 67 percent of the variance in assertive norms, and generally replicate the broad regional patterns of Welzel and Dalton (2014). Three Western cultural zones reflect high levels of both assertive and allegiant norms in the upper right of the figure. The Sinic East (China and other East Asian nations) and the Indic East (India and other

**Figure 2.** Cultural zones on the allegiance-assertive plane.
Culture zones are described in Welzel (2013: Introduction).
South Asian nations) score above average on allegiance, but below the average of assertive norms. Sub-Saharan Africa and the ex-Soviet states generally score below average on both norms. Thus the broad continuity of the allegiance-assertion configuration across different waves of the WVS underlines the point that cultural change proceeds on inert trajectories.

**Longitudinal evidence of cultural trends**

Much of the literature on cultural change argues that allegiant-style values have declined over time as a consequence of social modernization and there has been a concomitant increase in assertive-style values (Dalton, 2015; Inglehart, 1990). Similarly, our previous analysis of cross-sectional generational differences found evidence of such a pattern across global regions (Welzel and Dalton, 2014).

We want to expand these analyses by replicating the measurement of the two cultural dimensions across the available waves of the WVS for each nation. Then we compare the degree of change in both norms as a function of the length of time from the earliest to the most recent WVS in each nation. The left-hand diagram in Figure 3 shows that the length of the time gap (in years) between the earliest and latest survey in a country is essentially unrelated to change in allegiant norms ($R^2 = 0.00$). Most countries show no significant change in allegiant norms, hovering around the 0.0 change value. Asian nations are no exception: Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, and Vietnam all show an insignificant change in allegiant norms.

The absence of a general trend in allegiant norms suggests that previous evidence of an age pattern in these norms may be due to a lifecycle effect, with people tending to become more allegiant as they age. This interpretation is consistent with well-established findings in life-course psychology: people tend to be more at peace with their social environment as they get older.

For assertive norms on the right side of Figure 3, the evidence looks quite different. Assertive norms are clearly on the rise with the passage of time ($R^2 = 0.40$). The pattern is most pronounced among Western nations but it is not limited to them. Assertive norms also rise with a longer time gap in Asia. Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan are cases in point. The only group of countries that systematically deviates from the upward trend is the ex-Soviet zone, including Russia. The evidence in Figure 3 tells us that the age pattern in assertive norms represents a true cohort effect: younger generations are more assertive as they enter the population and stay that way as they age. Hence, the thesis of a rising assertive spirit in modern mass publics seems accurate.

In summary, this new longitudinal evidence suggests that just as we found allegiant and assertive norms are independent of each other in the cross section, comparing change across time in each nation suggests these norms are following different trajectories in the temporal dimension. The temporal evidence suggests that the emergence of assertive norms seems less related to the erosion of allegiant norms than we earlier claimed (Welzel and Dalton, 2014). Nevertheless, the diagnosis that assertive norms tend to increase in most of the world remains valid.

**The civic culture and good governance**

The idea of a culture-institution congruence suggests that how a society is governed reflects key features of its culture. Ever since Lipset (1981) hypothesized an inherent trade-off between
Figure 3. Change in allegiance and assertion norms as a function of time passage.
This figure is limited to nations that have been surveyed at least twice by the WVS, always using the largest time distance between available surveys for a given nation.
“legitimate” and “effective” governance, scholars have developed quite strong ideas about the cultural features that are conducive to these two performance dimensions of governance. Interestingly, the cultural features in question closely match our distinction between allegiant and assertive norms.

For instance, when the student revolt of the late 1960s showed signs of an emerging assertive culture, many prominent scholars were deeply concerned (Crozier et al., 1975). Even today, scholars have reservations about interpreting nonviolent citizen protest in the same positive way they do when outlining the manifold civic benefits of activity in voluntary associations (Deutsch et al., 2005). These divergent views on nonviolent protest and associational membership are a legacy of an influential article by Huntington (1968), in which he contrasted the dangers of noninstitutionalized mass participation with the benefits of institutionalized citizen action: while the latter is regulated, the former can easily run out of control, potentially ending up in disorder.

In light of the reservations against self-coordinated citizen action, many experts saw the expansion of protest politics as a disruptive force. Lipset’s (1981) idea of an inherent trade-off between legitimate and effective governance played an important role in framing the problem. Thus, Crozier et al. (1975) claimed that rising protest politics increases the popular pressure on governments, which might initially seem like a push toward more legitimate governance. Yet, responding to public pressures distracts time and energy from solving problems and effective governance suffers. Eroding government effectiveness then backfires to government legitimacy, which will also suffer. To these scholars, the inevitable result is a governance crisis.

The negative concern about assertive citizens continues to this day. It is evident in Putnam’s (2000) work on social capital and his views on the civic culture necessary to make democracy flourish. In Bowling Alone, Putnam discussed the rise of social movement activity and citizen protest. But he dismissed these trends, arguing that they provide no substitute for the social capital that is lost with declining activity in formal associations, decreasing social trust, and other aspects of an allegiant culture. Putnam’s skepticism of the rising assertive culture is also evident in the way he measures social capital. The indicators he uses, from trust to membership to voting and church attendance, generally fall into the allegiant category of civic activism. There is nothing inherent in the definition of social capital that limits it to allegiant activism. On the contrary, because social movement activity cannot emerge without extensive citizen networks, its presence is a testimony to social capital in action.

In summary, there is widespread skepticism of assertive orientations and activities, in stark contrast with an overly positive view of allegiant orientations and activities. The dominant expectation is that allegiant citizens are good for both legitimate and effective governance. By contrast, many analysts argue that the impact of assertive citizenship on governance is unclear at best, if not outright negative. However, no one has empirically tested how the mixture of allegiant and assertive norms in a country’s political culture relates to legitimate and effective governance. Given that assumptions about this relationship so strongly shape our thinking about the positive and negative externalities of political culture, this is a profound gap in the literature. The following analysis addresses this gap by examining how legitimate and effective governance is related to the allegiant and assertive elements of political culture.

**Predicting governance performance**

In contrast to Hutchison and Xu (forthcoming) in this issue, we treat culture as a predictor of governance, although we also try to separate the possible reciprocal effects. We follow Welzel
and Dalton (2014) in identifying legitimacy and effectiveness as the two key dimensions of the quality of institutions and governance performance (also Lipset, 1981). We (and they) distinguish between political regimes on two accounts: democratic accountability and regulatory capacity. Democratic accountability represents the legitimacy dimension and regulatory capacity the effectiveness dimension.

While citizen perceptions of government are important to study (Park, forthcoming), these can conflate objective reality with individuals’ subjective values. We are more interested in actual government performance, for which reason we draw our dependent variables from the World Bank’s Global Governance Indicators (GGI). The GGI assume that a limited number of factors characterize the institutional quality of governance, among them democratic accountability and regulatory capacity. Hence, by bundling several dozen indicators into a smaller number of overarching dimensions, the measurement biases of the single indicators average each other out, providing more reliable and more robust measures of the key performance aspects of governance (Kaufmann et al., 2010).

First, the “Voice and Accountability” index combines information from various democracy indices into a single, fine-grained measure of democratically legitimate governance. The index includes the Freedom House’s civil liberties and political rights ratings, the Polity Project’s “autocracy-democracy” scores, and several more indicators to extract a dimension of accountable governance.

Second, we combine “Control of Corruption” and “Rule of Law” to measure regulatory state capacity, which are derived from an equally broad set of indicators. Obviously, if a state is able to prevent its officeholders from abusing their power for private benefit, and if this state is able to enforce its laws, then it has strong regulatory capacity. Hence, we use the average score of “Control of Corruption” and “Rule of Law” to measure effective governance. This approach covers Lipset’s two dimensions of institutional quality using the same measurement as Welzel and Dalton (2014).

To analyze the culture-institution link, we use more than a hundred societies covered by the WVS for which we have measures of the two key cultural orientations, as well as the institutional qualities of accountability and effectiveness. Table 2 shows two sets of regression models, one set for each of the two aspects of institutional quality. Allegiant and assertive norms are mostly measured before the governance indicators and in a few cases at the same time (i.e. using the 1995–2012 WVS surveys). The governance indicators are for the year 2012—the latest measure available at the time of this writing. The first two models in both sets of regressions (models 1.1 and 2.1) control for the effects of the two cultural norms against each other.

Model 1.1 shows that assertive norms have a highly significant and strongly positive effect on accountable governance \( (b = 1.50) \) in the base two variable model. This implies that an engaged public encourages the government to be more responsive to its citizens. Allegiant norms, by contrast, show a very weak effect on accountable governance \( (b = 0.28) \). This pattern was already visible in Figure 1. Some of the strongest allegiant cultures exist in nondemocratic countries, including China, Jordan, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Vietnam. Conversely, all countries scoring higher than 0.50 scale points in assertive norms are democratic. These results are broadly consistent with our earlier findings, with an even stronger effect for assertive norms in this replication.

Model 2.1 examines the impact of cultural norms on effective governance; both norm sets have strong and significant effects. Allegiant norms increase the effectiveness of governance, presumably by giving government more latitude of action. At the same time, assertive norms have an even stronger influence on making governments more effective. The most plausible reason for this
Table 2. Country-level effects of allegiant culture and assertive culture on accountable governance and effective governance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Accountable governance 2012</th>
<th>Effective governance 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M1-1</td>
<td>M1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.20 (1.6)</td>
<td>0.23 (4.5)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegiant culture</td>
<td>0.28 (1.4)</td>
<td>-0.18 (-0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive culture</td>
<td>1.5 (13.3)***</td>
<td>0.57 (3.2)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge economy</td>
<td>0.47 (4.1)***</td>
<td>0.29 (2.5)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic tradition</td>
<td>0.40 (5.9)***</td>
<td>0.12 (2.5)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global linkage</td>
<td>0.00 (0.3)***</td>
<td>0.00 (0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged DV 1995</td>
<td>0.83 (13.5)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (countries)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Values Survey, most recent survey of each society.
Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with the T-values in parentheses. Test statistics for heteroskedasticity (White test), multicollinearity (variance inflation factors), and outliers/leverage cases (DFHTs) reveal no violation of ordinary least squares assumptions. Allegiant and assertive cultures are measured over 1995–2012, all control variables at the start of the observation period, in 1995.

\[ p > 0.10; ^* p < 0.100; ^*^* p < 0.050; ^*^*^* p < 0.005. \]
observation is that a more assertive mass culture exposes power holders to stronger norm expectations. This makes it likelier that the power holders themselves internalize these norms. Consequently, an ethos of efficacy becomes more deeply ingrained in the elite culture. In short, one does not have to choose an unobtrusive public in order for government to be effective.

The next two sets of models (M1.2 and M1.3; M2.2 and M2.3) include additional—and very plausible—control variables: the extent of the knowledge economy, the length of the democratic tradition, and the strength of “global linkage” (all controls measured at the beginning of the period, in 1995). A knowledge economy is a plausible predictor of governance because “good” governance involves organizational know-how and societies advanced in knowledge should have large stocks of know-how (Glaeser et al., 2007). A long democratic tradition is a plausible predictor of “good” governance because it means a richer experience with best practice standards in governance (Gerring et al., 2005). Finally, global linkage may be linked to “good” governance because more internationally integrated countries have more exposure to the best practice standards of governance in other countries (Levitsky and Way, 2010).

Each of the models with controls shows that a society’s knowledge economy and its democratic tradition have significant and positive effects on accountable and effective governance. A society’s global linkage has a less significant and weaker effect on both forms of governance (the other two controls absorb much of this effect).

If we look at which cultural variable survives the controls, M1.3 shows that assertive norms still have a significant and positive effect on accountable governance (b = 0.57) whereas M1.2 shows that allegiant norms still have a very weak coefficient (b = –0.18). M2.2 shows that allegiant norms retain a significant positive effect on effective governance, but their impact on effective government wanes when other national attributes are controlled. This suggests that assertive norms go hand-in-hand with the development of knowledge-based societies and democratic systems, which is actually a cornerstone of social modernization theory.

This might lead us to a mixed conclusion: assertive norms are beneficial for accountable governance whereas allegiant norms are conducive to effective governance. Hence, the stagnation of one and rise of the other is a mixed blessing. It is best when both allegiant and assertive norms are strong because then we are likely to get both accountable and effective governance. The striking governance performance of the Scandinavian societies, which combine strongly assertive cultures with strongly allegiant cultures, seems to confirm this point. The allegiance-assertion combination, then, would seem to be the best of all worlds and could be seen as the “healthy mixture” that Almond and Verba described in The Civic Culture.

However, this conclusion is premature because we have not dealt with the important question of the direction of causality. Therefore, in the last pair of models (Models 1–4 and 2–4) we use Granger-causality methods to test if cultural norms shift the subsequent governance performance above the level of the prior governance performance. The models also test if the two norms act independently of their own dependence on the prior governance performance by including a lagged version of the dependent variable. This takes care of two issues. First, we solve the problem of omitted variable bias because the lagged dependent variable embodies every influence on prior governance, including influences not explicitly addressed in the model. Second, insofar as cultural norms are endogenous to governance, we remove this endogeneity by isolating the variation in norms that exists independent of prior governance. For instance, if assertive norms depend strongly on prior accountable governance, introducing the latter as a control will largely absorb the effect of assertive norms. In this case, the latter will show no more effect of its own on subsequent accountable governance.
The fourth set of models in both regression panels demonstrates that assertive norms survive the Granger-causality test with statistically significant effects on both accountable and effective governance. Allegiant norms, by contrast, do not have a significant effect on either aspect of governance. This shows that the allegiant culture is shaped by prior effective governance. Therefore, if we do not control for this, it seems as if the allegiant culture strongly affects subsequent effective governance. Controlling for allegiant norms’ dependence on prior effective governance, the illusiveness of its contribution to subsequent effective governance becomes obvious.

Figure 4 shows national scores from two partial regression plots to visualize the key findings from the basic two-variable models (M1-1, M2-1). The left-hand diagram shows that a society’s score on allegiant norms, while controlling for the level of assertive norms, is virtually unrelated to the accountability of government. For instance, the figure shows that many ex-communist countries have much weaker allegiant norms than other societies with similar assertive norms, but this does not make accountable governance worse than it is in other societies at the same level of assertiveness. Moreover, East Asian societies are in various locations in the figure, but this is irrelevant since the partial effects of allegiant norms do not influence accountability. In conclusion, at the same level of assertiveness, more or less allegiance does not make governance more or less accountable.

The right-hand diagram in Figure 4 shows a reversal of roles for the two cultural norms. Assertiveness has a strong positive effect on accountable governance, even while holding assertiveness constant. Controlling for allegiant norms, assertive norms explain 64 percent of the cross-national variance in accountable governance. In addition, the societies highest in accountable government generally come from affluent, established democracies in the West and display a highly assertive public. Conversely, assertiveness is lower in many of the developing nations in East Asia, which are located at the bottom left of this diagram.

Figure 5 presents a comparable picture of national differences for effective governance. The left-hand diagram shows that allegiant norms have a positive influence on effective governance even after controlling for assertive norms. Indeed, allegiant norms account for 23 percent of the cross-national variation in effective governance. But assertive norms have a stronger partial effect, explaining 57 percent of the cross-national variation in effective governance.

This pattern is most clearly represented by the Scandinavian countries as well as several other affluent democracies. At the opposite end of the distribution, when a society’s assertive norms are weaker than their allegiant norms suggest, their effective governance is worse. This pattern is typical for many Islamic countries (like Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan), as well as Belarus, China, and Russia.

Hence, the overall conclusion is straightforward and consistent with our earlier findings. The stagnation of allegiant norms and the parallel emergence of assertive norms should not be worrisome developments in terms of the performance of government. Instead, in terms of both accountable and effective governance, the cultural shift toward assertive orientations has positive consequences that empower the people.

Conclusion

Confirming previous research, new and broader evidence from the sixth wave of the WVS indicates that the transition from allegiant to assertive cultures is real. In the mid-20th century, democracies expected their citizens to be supportive and largely quiescent—and there was general conformance to this model. The leading political culture researchers considered such a pattern as
Figure 4. Visualization of cultural norms and accountable governance by nation.
This figure portrays the partial relationships for each nation from model 1.1 in Table 2.
Source: World Values Survey most recent survey for cultural norms, GPI database for accountable governance.
Figure 5. Visualization of cultural norms and effective governance by nation.
This figure portrays the partial relationships for each nation from model 2.1 in Table 2.
Source: World Values Survey most recent survey for cultural norms, GPI database for effective governance.
essential for democratic governments to function properly. It is also likely that many individuals in less developed nations were unaware of or at least untouched by politics.

These patterns have changed. People in mature postindustrial democracies have become skeptical of state authority and institutions and are now more willing to assert their own views. Almond and Verba sensed this transition in their update to *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1980). Moreover, this skeptical public is different from anti-system orientations at other times in democracy’s history, because assertive citizenship coexists with a strong support for democratic goals, political tolerance, and support for individual liberties. The modal democratic citizen is now much more likely to be an assertive citizen than in the past.

But now the cultural pattern in developing nations more closely fits the allegiant citizen model that Almond and Verba initially admired. Because of changes in communications and living standards, citizens in the developing world are more politically aware than the parochial image projected in earlier political culture studies. One of the shortfalls of earlier research is that they did not anticipate how autocratic leaders—from Beijing to Moscow—could mold (and repress) public opinion to produce a supportive, compliant, and allegiant public. Thus, the WVS routinely finds that governments in many autocratic states elicit greater public trust than the most democratic of affluent democracies (Dalton and Shin, 2011). Almond and Verba likely never expected that the Vietnamese public would trust their government more than the Swedes. Allegiant norms can be system stabilizing, even in non-democratic systems.

The development of assertive democratic citizenship should not be worrisome for the quality and prospects of democracy. Many political culture scholars maintained that democracy depends on an allegiant and relatively passive public. This prompted the initial worries about the cultural changes of the student revolts of the late 1960s, and the persisting uneasiness about contentious forms of political action. Quite to the contrary of these presumptions, we have demonstrated that accountable and effective governance generally improve in the course of this cultural change.

Inglehart’s (1977) theory of postmaterialism anticipated the cultural changes of recent decades. This cultural change is a process that Welzel’s (2013) general theory of emancipation aptly describes as “human empowerment”: improving living conditions—from increasing life expectancies to longer education to wider connectivity—transforms the lives of increasing population segments from a source of threats into a source of opportunities. As this happens, societies ascend the “utility ladder of freedoms:” practicing and tolerating universal freedoms becomes increasingly vital to taking advantage of the opportunities that a more promising life offers. Because evolution has shaped humans as perceptive beings, such fundamental changes in objective utilities do not escape people’s attention. Thus, in recognition of the grown utilities of universal freedoms, people adopt emancipative values that emphasize these freedoms. Eventually, this micro-level value change accumulates to a mass-scale collective trend, visible in a shift from allegiant to assertive political cultures.

Certainly, rising assertive cultures present new challenges for democracies. A more assertive public places new demands on the political process; it also produces more contention and conflict. And it may question existing democratic institutions and require reforms to update them to meet contemporary needs. Eventually, however, rising assertive cultures bring us closer to realizing democracy’s key inspirational promise: empowering people to make their own decisions and to make their preferences heard and counted in politics.

Asian nations are no exception to this model. Although most of them exhibit considerably lower levels of assertive norms than is typical of mature democracies in postindustrial Western societies, Asian nations—and particularly the affluent East Asian nations—are on their way toward stronger
assertive norms as social modernization continues to reshape them. If this trend continues, the Chinese and Singaporean models—that is, the preservation of one-party rule under progressing modernization—will come under increasing strain. The erosion of these autocratic models is difficult to predict, but it seems clear that the logic of modernization and its cultural consequences operate against them.

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Notes
1. There are, of course, debates on the nature and process of value change (see Abramson, 2011; Flanagan and Lee, 2003; Schwartz, 2006).
2. Additional information on these surveys and access to the data sets are available on the project website: www.worldvaluessurvey.org.
3. Our measure summarizes three of the four components of Welzel’s (2013: 66–73) emancipative values. We leave out the fourth component (an emphasis on personal autonomy as a desired child quality) because it is more remote from politics and less relevant for a political culture. Otherwise, we follow Welzel’s measurement procedure in the appendix to Freedom Rising (http://www.cambridge.org/welzel (pp. 20–28)).
4. The loadings are from a hierarchical, two-stage factor analysis conducted with the pooled individual-level data using the latest survey from each society (weighting national samples to equal size). In the first stage, the 18 items group into six factors representing the domains of 1) institutional confidence, 2) philanthropic faith, 3) norm compliance, 4) individual liberties, (5) equal opportunities, and 6) people’s voice. We use an oblique rotation (“direct oblimin”) that allows for correlated factors, and create factor scores for each respondent. In the second stage, we factor analyze these six created scores (using varimax rotation). The six factors group into two meta-factors, which represent allegiant orientations (factors 1–3) and assertive orientations (factors 4–6). The two overarching cultural configurations—allegiance and assertion—would not show up in a one-step factor analysis because they represent second-order cultural dimensions.
5. To calculate an overall score of allegiant and assertive orientations for each respondent, we standardized the scores for each item between 0.0 and 1.0. Then we averaged the respondent scores over the nine items on both of the two cultural orientations. For a more in-depth discussion of alternative measurement methods, see Welzel (2013: Box 2.1, 60–62).
6. Of these 106 nations, 60 were last surveyed in the sixth wave, 18 in the fifth wave, 25 in the fourth wave, and three in the third wave.
7. This is from an analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted separately for allegiant and assertive orientations at the country level, using Welzel’s 10 culture zones as the grouping variable. The eta-squared of
this ANOVA (0.38 for allegiant orientations, 0.67 for assertive orientations) indicate how much the 10 culture zone groupings capture the cross-national variance in norms.

8. The “old” West is largely Catholic Europe; the “reformed” West are protestant mixed denominational nations in the West; the “new” West are Anglo-American democracies (see Welzel, 2013: Table 2.1).

9. We used the same procedures as described in Table 1, with comparable factor loadings across WVS waves.

10. However, Dalton (2015) finds that norms similar to our allegiant orientations have a strong generational component. This may be a function of different measurement of the two dimensions of cultural change, or a process distinctive to the US.

11. This contrasts to a situation in which numerous organizations produce separate indices of governance quality. For instance, the democracy measures by Freedom House, the Polity Project, the Bertelsmann Foundation, and The Economist. This leaves researchers with the difficult decision of which indicator to choose or how to combine them.

12. Some of these indicators are taken from survey data. But first, this is the much smaller set of indicators; second, it is used for a minority of countries in the world; and third, these survey items do not overlap with the ones we use to measure culture. Thus, there is no tautological correlation between institutions and culture in our models. Moreover, the GPI provide the most information-rich data available on government performance.

13. Because effectiveness has potentially varied meanings across regimes, we cross-validated our measure by comparing to two other indicators. The Economist Intelligence Unit (www.eui.com) has a 14-item index of the functioning of the government, including elements such as quality of administration, government control of its territory, regularized government, and the rule of law. The World Bank (http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi) has a separate measure of government effectiveness that includes perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies. Our measure of government effectiveness correlates at $r = 0.83$ with the EIU measure and $r = 0.96$ with the World Bank index.

14. As we do with the other variables in our analyses, we normalize the original scores into a scale from minimum 0.0 for the worst observed scores in accountable and effective governance to 1.0 for the best observed score.

15. We measure the strength of the knowledge economy by the World Bank’s “knowledge index” (KI), which summarizes information on overall availability of information technology in a society, years of schooling, and scientific output per capita (see http://info.worldbank.org/etools/kam2/ KAM_page5.asp). We measure the democratic tradition by the “democracy stock” index (Gerring et al., 2005), which indicates the temporal accumulation of Polity democracy scores from 1900 until 1995 with a one-percent deflation for each additional year back into the past. We measure “global linkages” by Dreher et al.’s (2008) combined economic, social, and political globalization index. All three measures are standardized into scale range from minimum 0.0 to maximum 1.0. Further measurement details are available in the appendix to Welzel (2013) at www.cambridge.org/welzel (see “OA 1: Technological Progress Index” at p. 2 for the measurement of knowledge economy development, p. 29 for the “democratic tradition,” and p. 77 for “global linkages”).

16. We computed separate models with controls for each cultural variable because collinearity measures (variance inflation factors below 5.0) remain within tolerable limits when one of the two culture measures is included with controls but cross tolerance limits when both are included with controls.

17. Another model included an interaction term to see if allegiant norms matter in interaction with assertive norms. The interaction term was not significant for either accountable or effective governance.
18. See the discussion of institutional changes that have already occurred in Cain et al. (2004) and Smith (2009).

References


