# BAK10: Comparative Democratic Politics
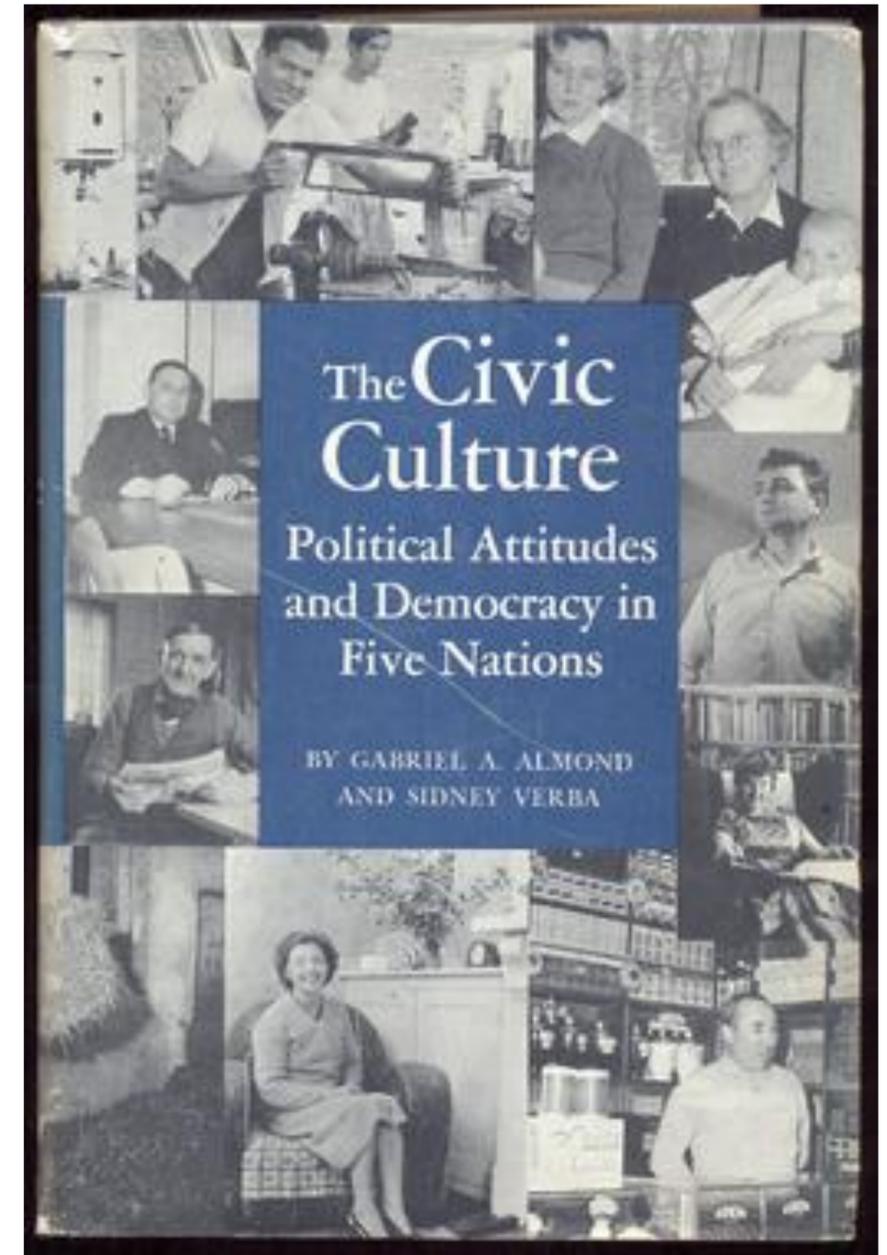
## Week 11 - Democracy, Culture and Norms

Leonardo Carella

# The Plan for Today

- Political Culture and Democracy.

- Emancipatory Values and Democracy? (Inglehart and Wenzel)

- Social Capital and Democracy? (Putnam)

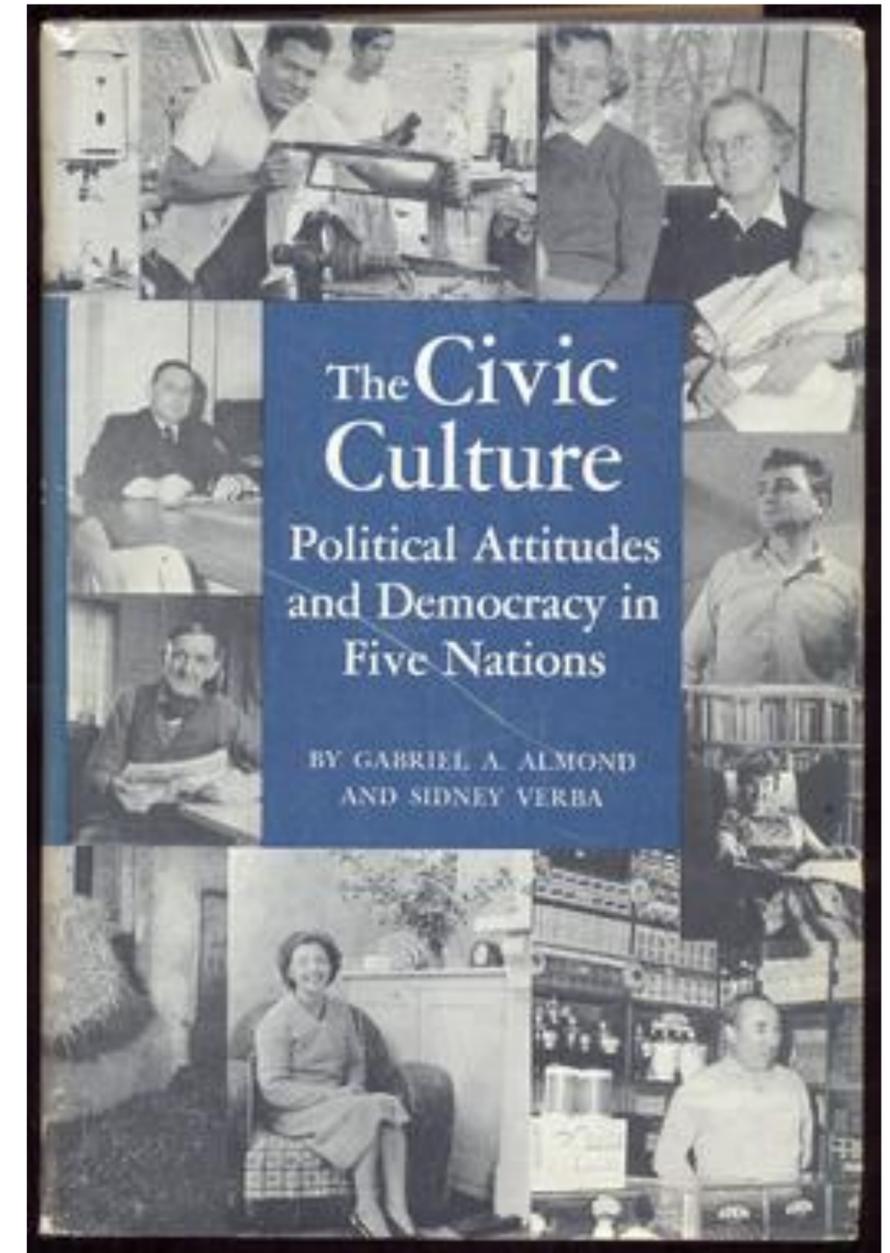- Cultural Explanations of Democracy in an Age of Backsliding.

# Political Culture

- Almond and Verba (1963): political culture as "attitudes and orientations toward politics among the members of a political system":

- (1) How much people *care* and *know* about politics, (2) how people *feel* about politics and government in general, (3) and how they view *themselves* as parts of the political system.

- More diffuse than "ideology", not specific to a certain set of incumbents.
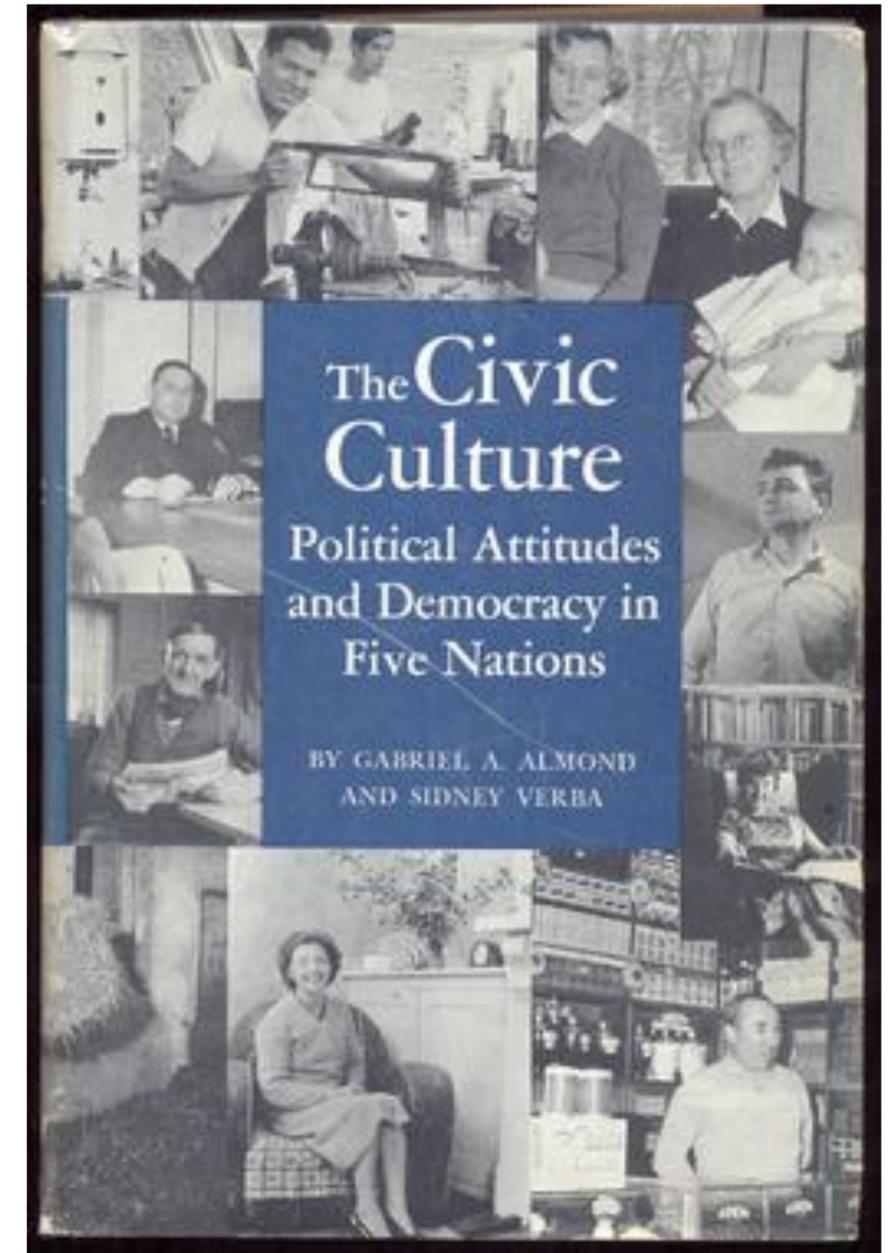
# Political Culture

- Three 'ideal types':

  - **Parochial**: little awareness of politics, oriented towards local/familial circles.

  - **Subject**: only awareness of political authority, characterised by obedience and compliance.

  - **Participant**: active and engaged, can support democracy but also lead to instability.

- Key claim: "A stable and effective democratic government . . . depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process—upon the political culture."



The Civic Culture
Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations
BY GABRIEL A. ALMOND AND SIDNEY VERBA
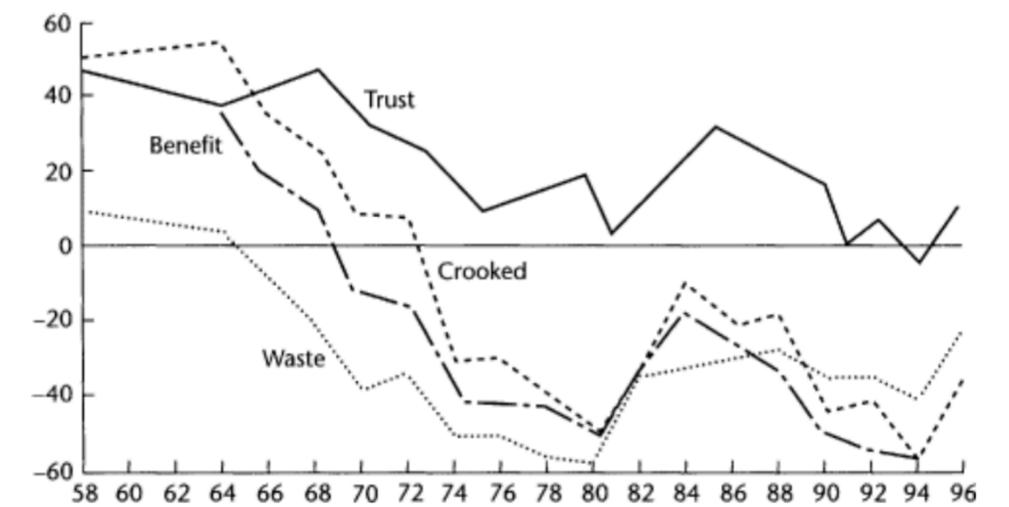
# Political Culture

- The 'best' type of political culture for democracy is the **civic culture**, which is mostly like the participant type, but with some level of deference to authority (`an 'allegiant-participative' mix).

- Good fits: UK (deferential); US (participant)

- Poor fits: Germany (lingering authoritarianism, limited participation, focussed on outputs), Italy and Mexico (low trust beyond small networks, alienated from politics).
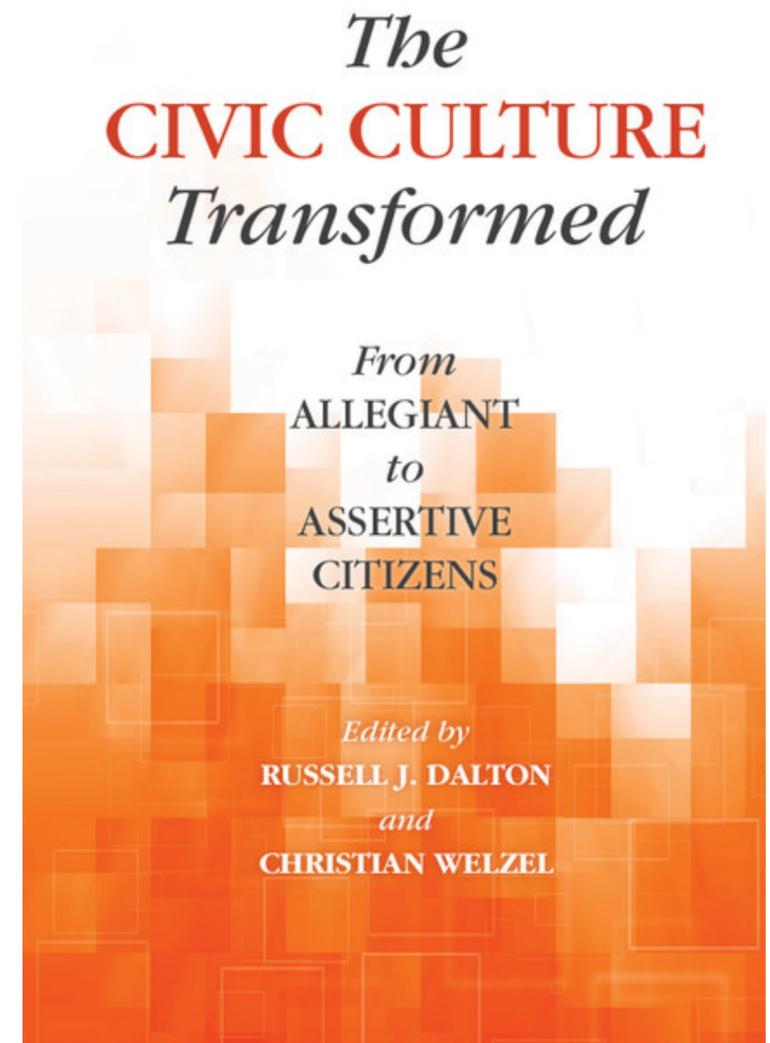
# But then…



Fig. 1.1. Confidence in politicians in the United States, 1958–1996.

# From Allegiant to Assertive

- Rise of more individualistic political orientations that demand more of politics (also connected with the 'cognitive mobilisation'/dealignment literature):

- **Post-materialist values:** priority on self-expression, well-being and participation over security, attained with economic well-being.

- **Emancipative values**: values that emphasise on individual autonomy, freedom of choice, and control over one's own life.

*The* **CIVIC CULTURE** *Transformed*

*From* **ALLEGIANT** *to* **ASSERTIVE CITIZENS**

*Edited by* **RUSSELL J. DALTON** *and* **CHRISTIAN WELZEL**
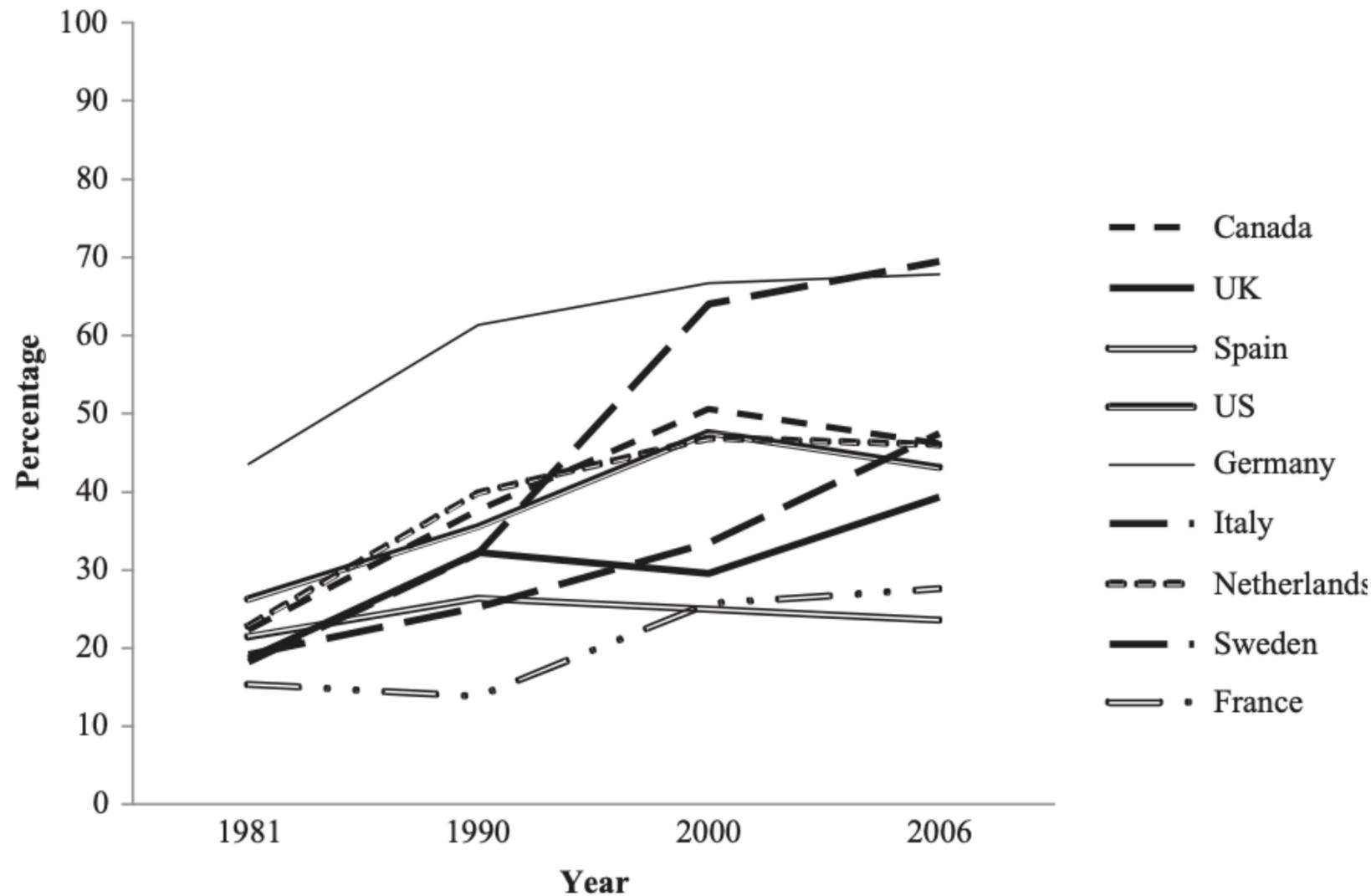
# From Allegiant to Assertive



FIGURE 3.3. Cross-national trends in responses to the Independence-Obedience Index.
*Note:* Percentage of respondents who identify "independence" (but not "obedience" as an important value to teach children.
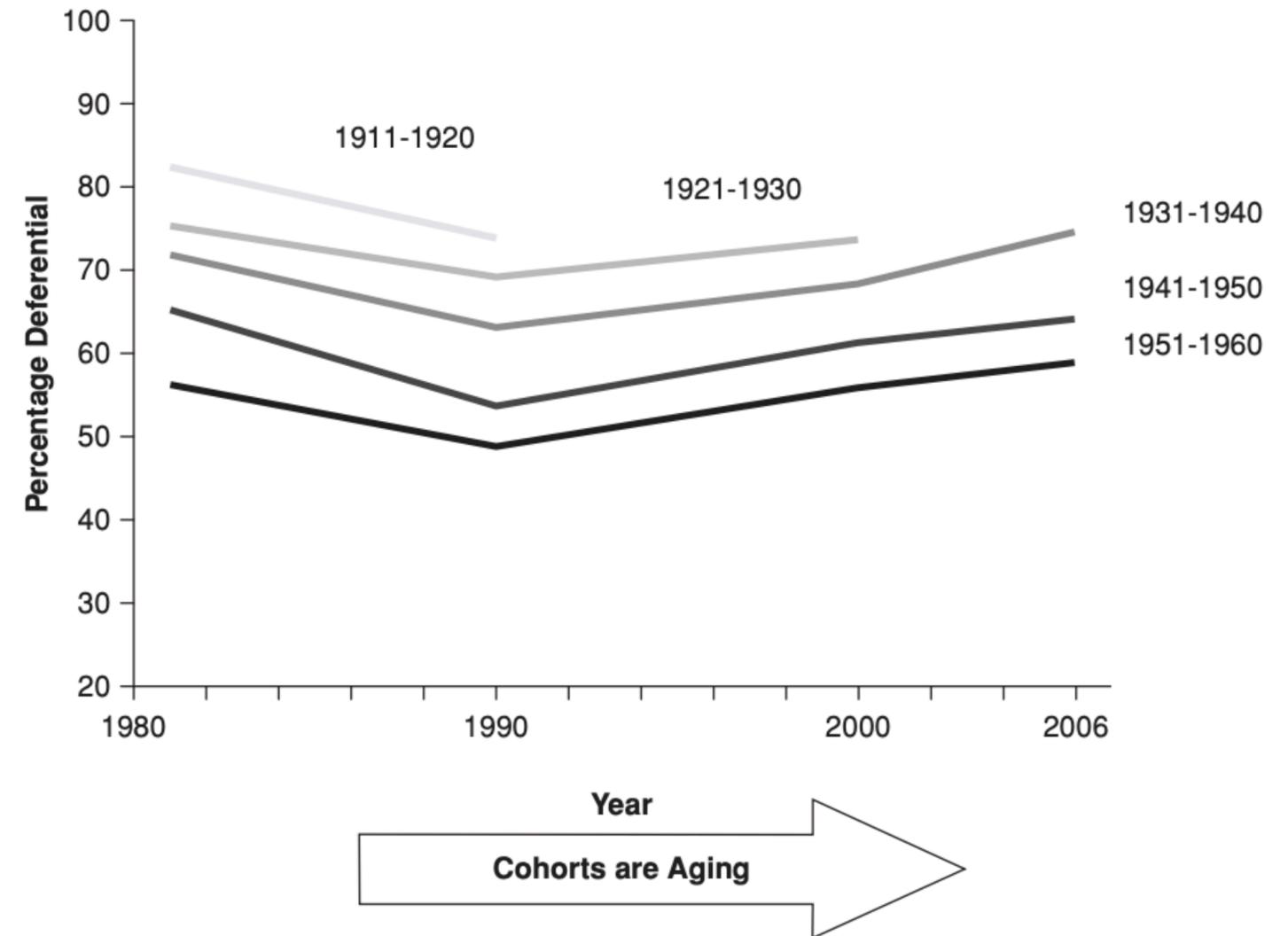*Source:* World Values Survey (1981, 1990, 2000, and 2006).

FIGURE 3.4. General deference by cohort, 1981–2006.
*Note:* The figure plots the percentage of respondents who considered "greater respect for authority" as a "good" thing.
*Source:* World Values Survey (1981, 1990, 2000, and 2006).

# From Allegiant to Assertive

- **Allegiant culture:**

  - Confidence in institutions, trust in others, positive disposition to politics, compliance with rules and norms.

- **Assertive culture:**

  - Belief in individual liberties, equal opportunities and that people should have a voice in collective decisions
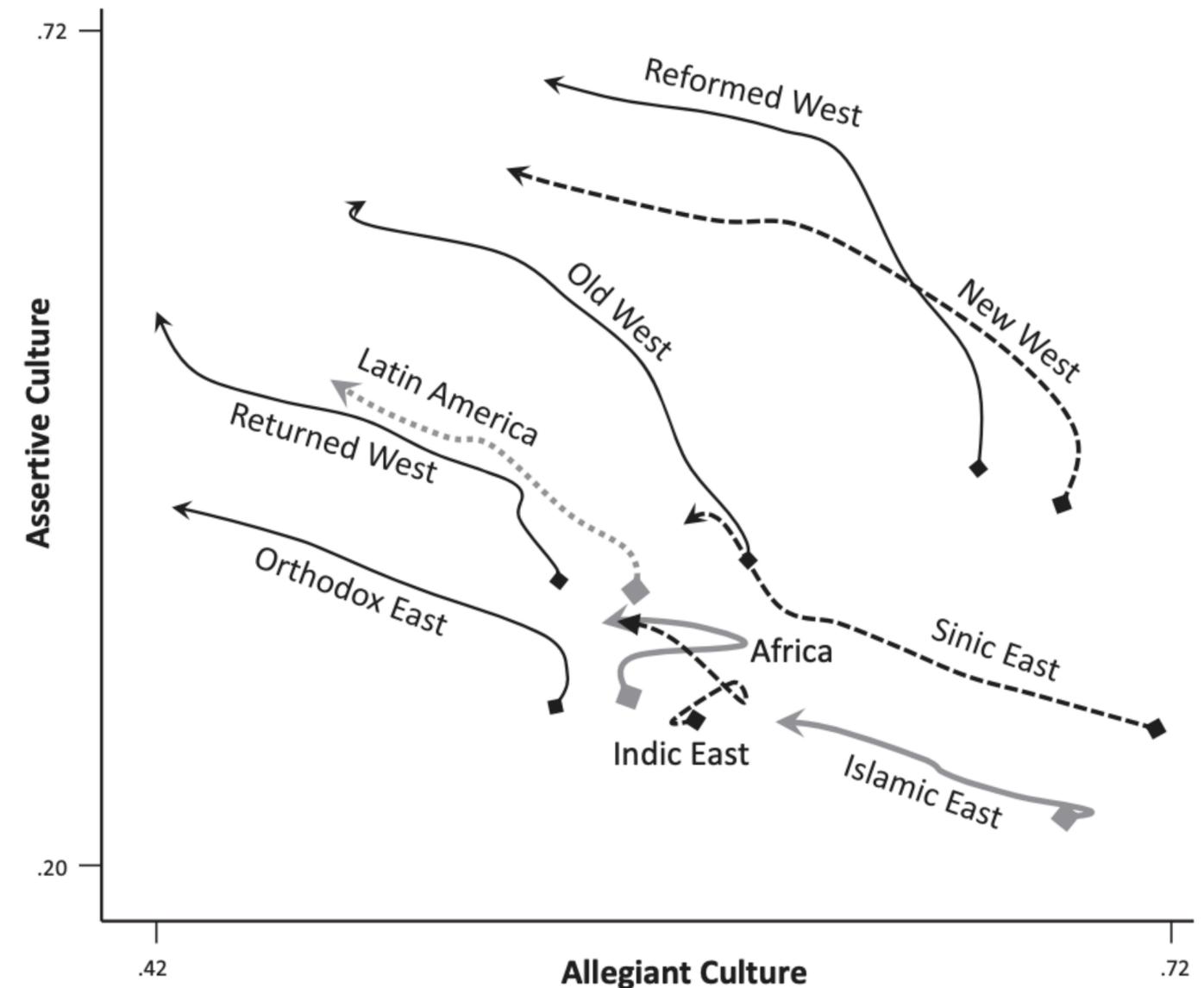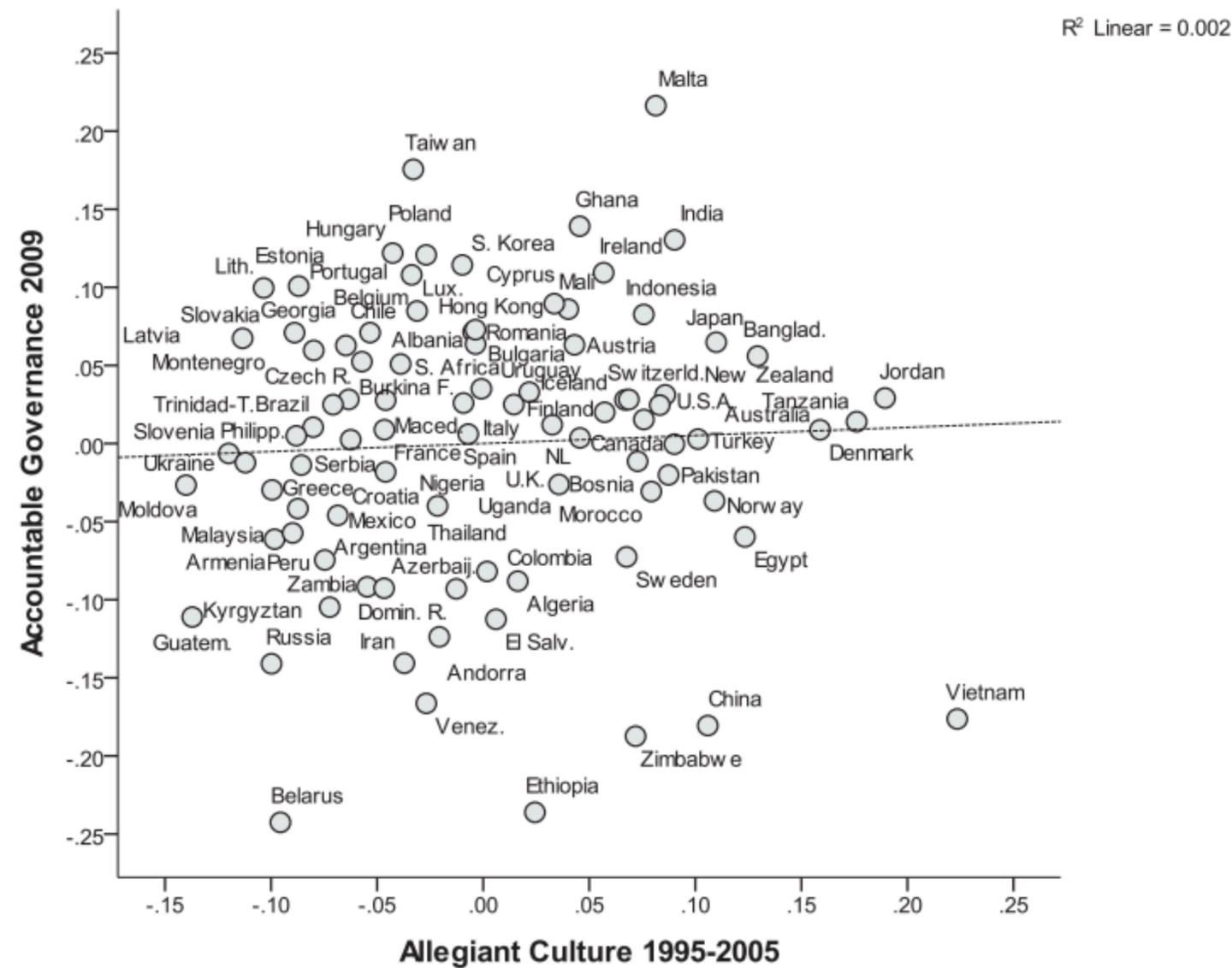


FIGURE 12.3. Allegiant and assertive cultures (culture zone cohort trajectories).
*Source:* World Values Survey, latest survey from each society, surveys weighted to equal sample size and broken down into eight successive birth cohorts: people born before 1921, between 1920 and 1930, between 1930 and 1940, between 1940 and 1950, between 1950 and 1960, between 1960 and 1970, between 1970 and 1980, and after 1980. Arrows follow the trace from the oldest cohort at the arrow tail to the youngest one at the arrow head.
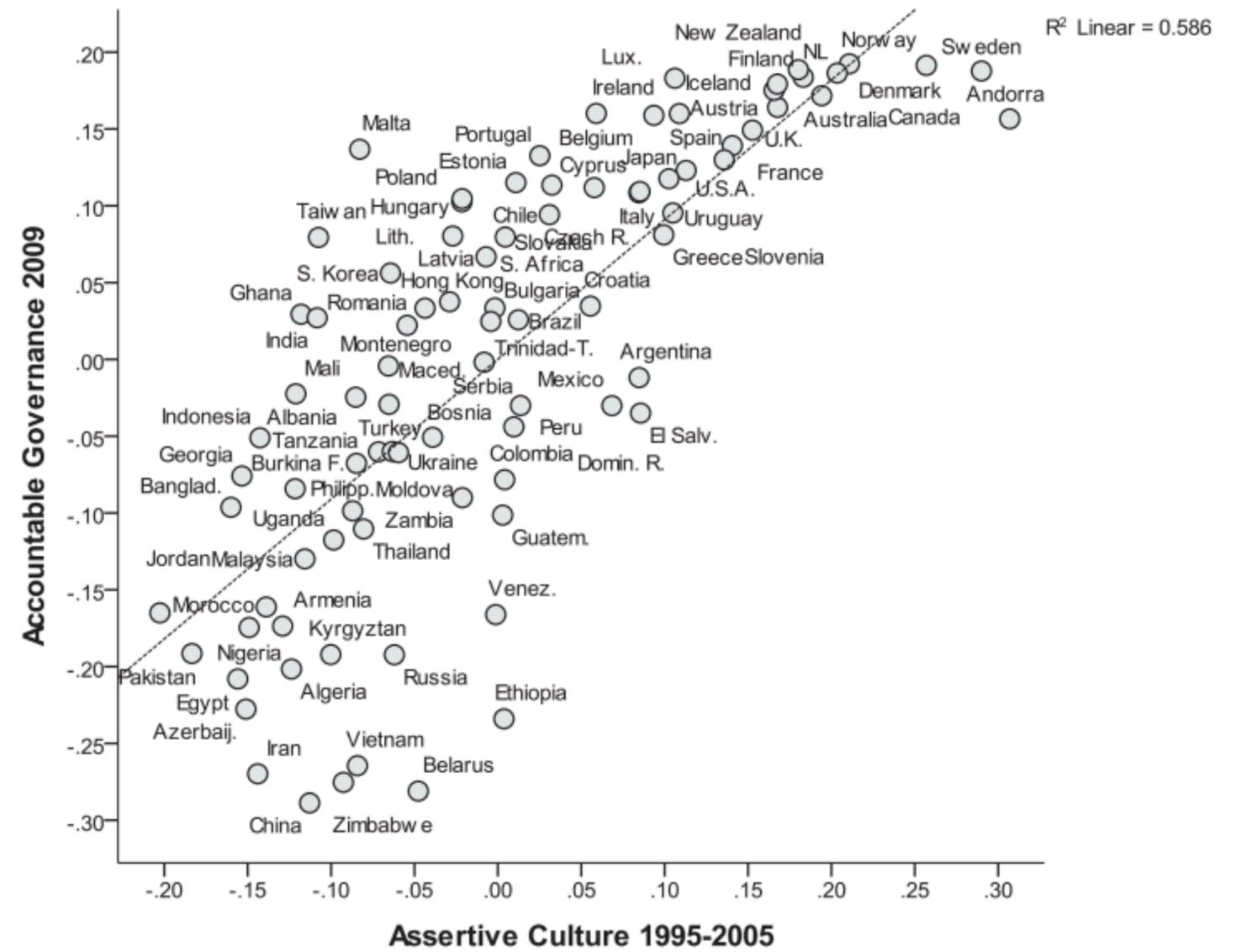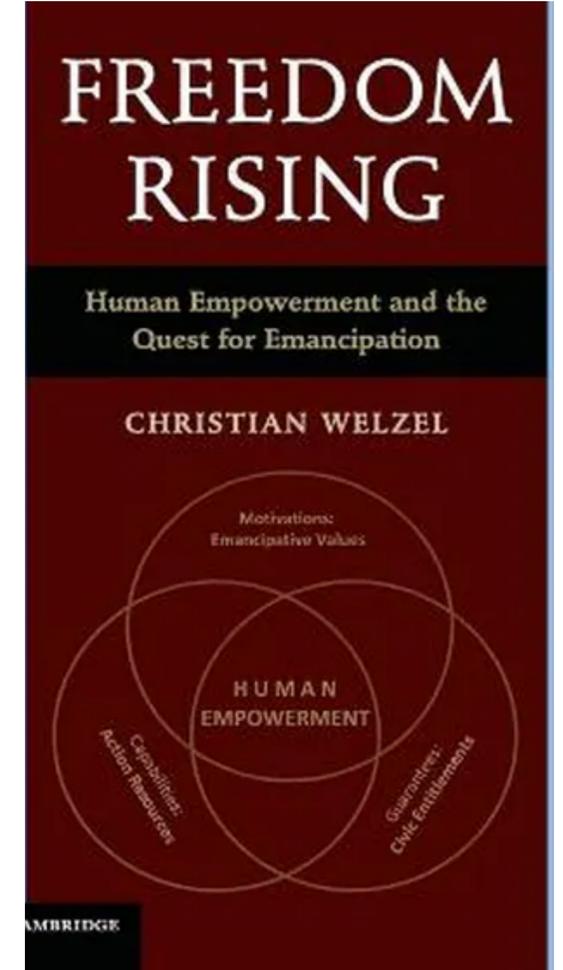
# From Allegiant to Assertive



FIGURE 12.4. Visualization of model 1.1 of Table 12.2.

# Welzel & Inglehart

- Optimistic view of a less deferential, more critical and engaged citizenry:

- In democracies, people can be dissatisfied (specific support) but still value the system (diffuse support).

- Not only essential for democracy to endure, but also for democratisation. Emancipative values "give social movements and civil society agents a major motivation to struggle for democratic freedoms."

**FREEDOM RISING**

Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation

CHRISTIAN WELZEL

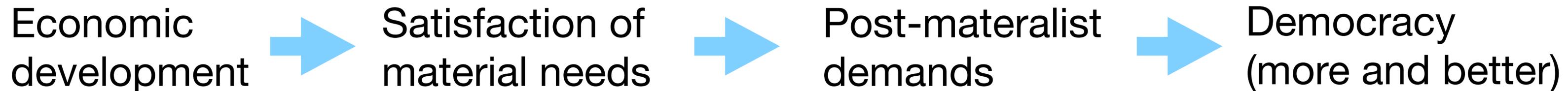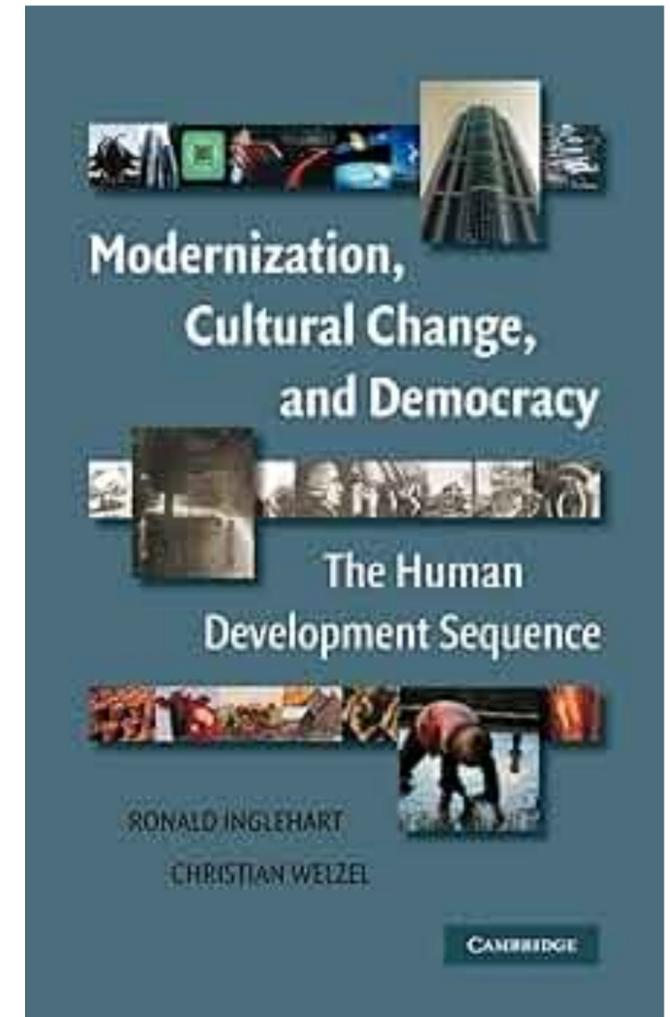Liberalism, Postmaterialism, and the Growth of Freedom
Christian Welzel & Ronald Inglehart

WHY THE FUTURE IS (STILL) DEMOCRATIC

*Christian Welzel, Stefan Kruse, and Lennart Brunkert*

# Welzel & Inglehart

- ***Cultural*** variant of modernisation theory:

- "The impact of economic development on democracy works primarily through its tendency to give rise to cultural changes that place increasing emphasis on human emancipation and self-expression."
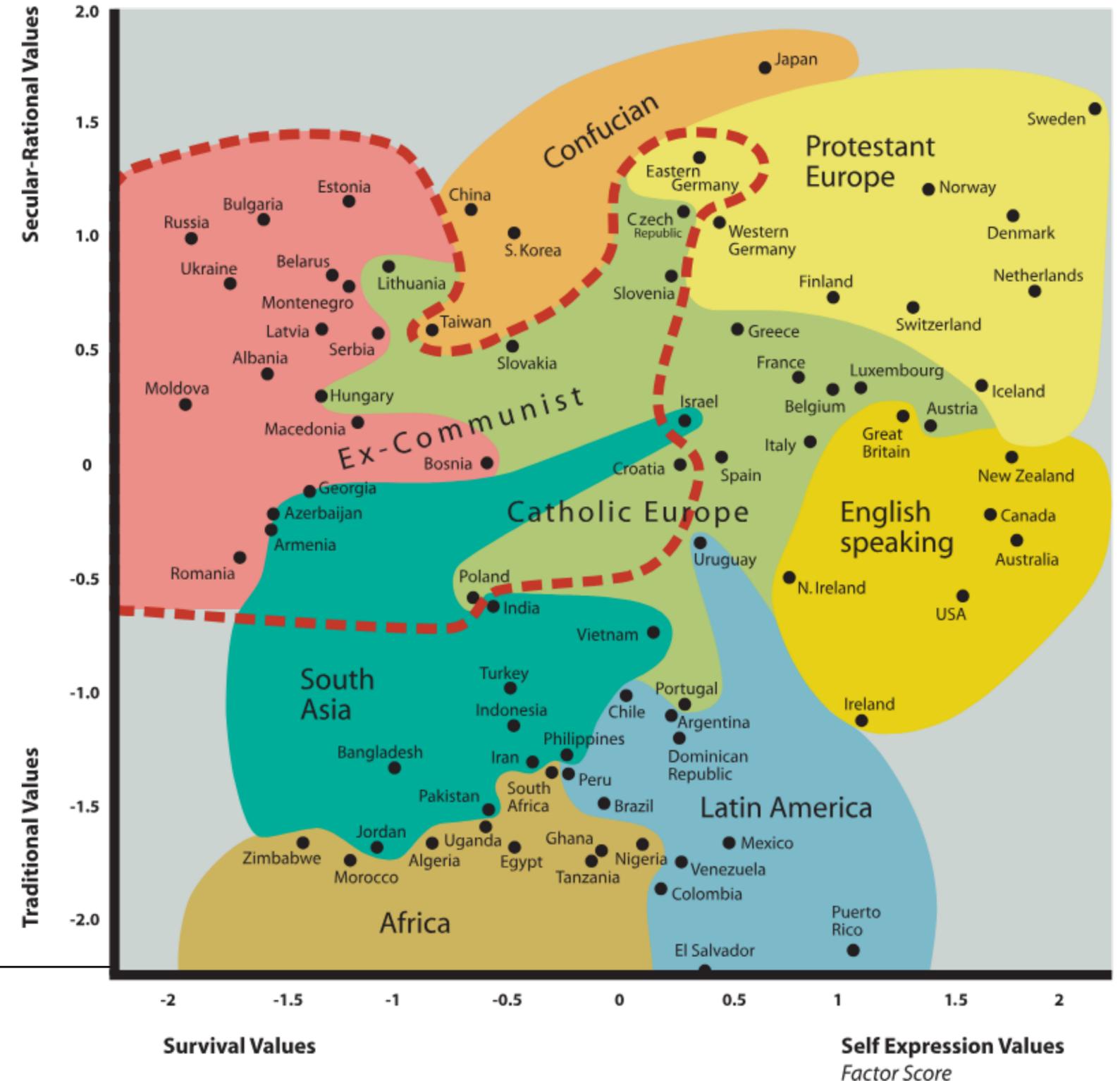
Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy

The Human Development Sequence

RONALD INGLEHART
CHRISTIAN WELZEL

CAMBRIDGE

Economic development ➡ Satisfaction of material needs ➡ Post-materalist demands ➡ Democracy (more and better)

# A *Very* Optimistic Take…

"the backsliding of democracies into authoritarianism is limited to societies in which emancipative values remain under-developed" (Welzel, 2021)

"The economic resurgence of China and Russia has a positive aspect: underlying changes are occurring that make the emergence of increasingly liberal and democratic political systems likely in the coming years" (Inglehart and Welzel, 2009)

• Welzel, C. (2021). Democratic horizons: What value change reveals about the future of democracy. *Democratization*, *28*(5), 992-1016. Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. "How development leads to democracy: What we know about modernization." *Foreign affairs* (2009): 33-48.
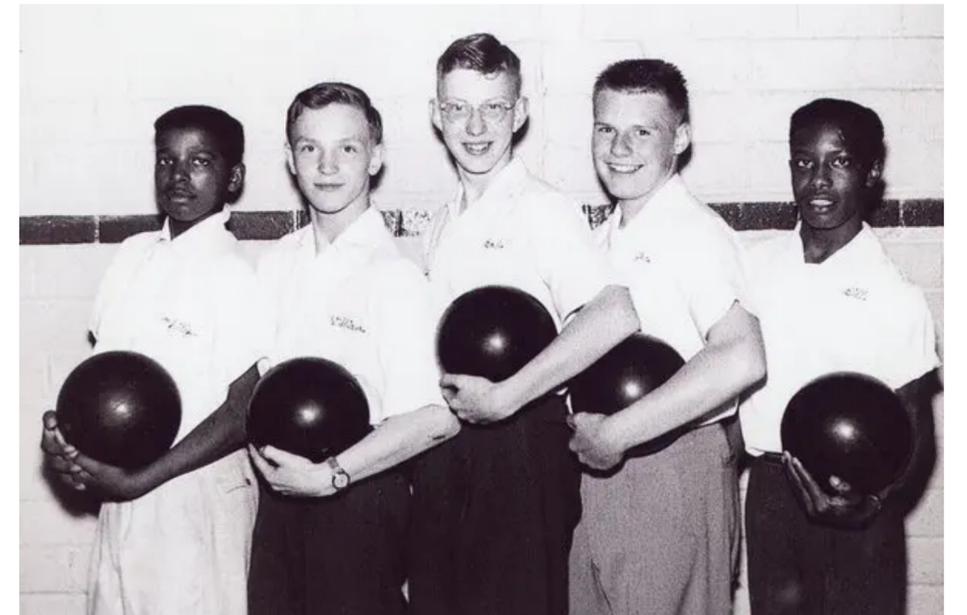
# Other Problems?

- **Normative bias**: non-Western, communitarian cultures considered 'deficient'.

- **Reverse causality**: democracy socialises citizens into 'congruent' values, which are effects, not causes.

- **Overly optimistic** about the role of bottom-up processes in democratisation.
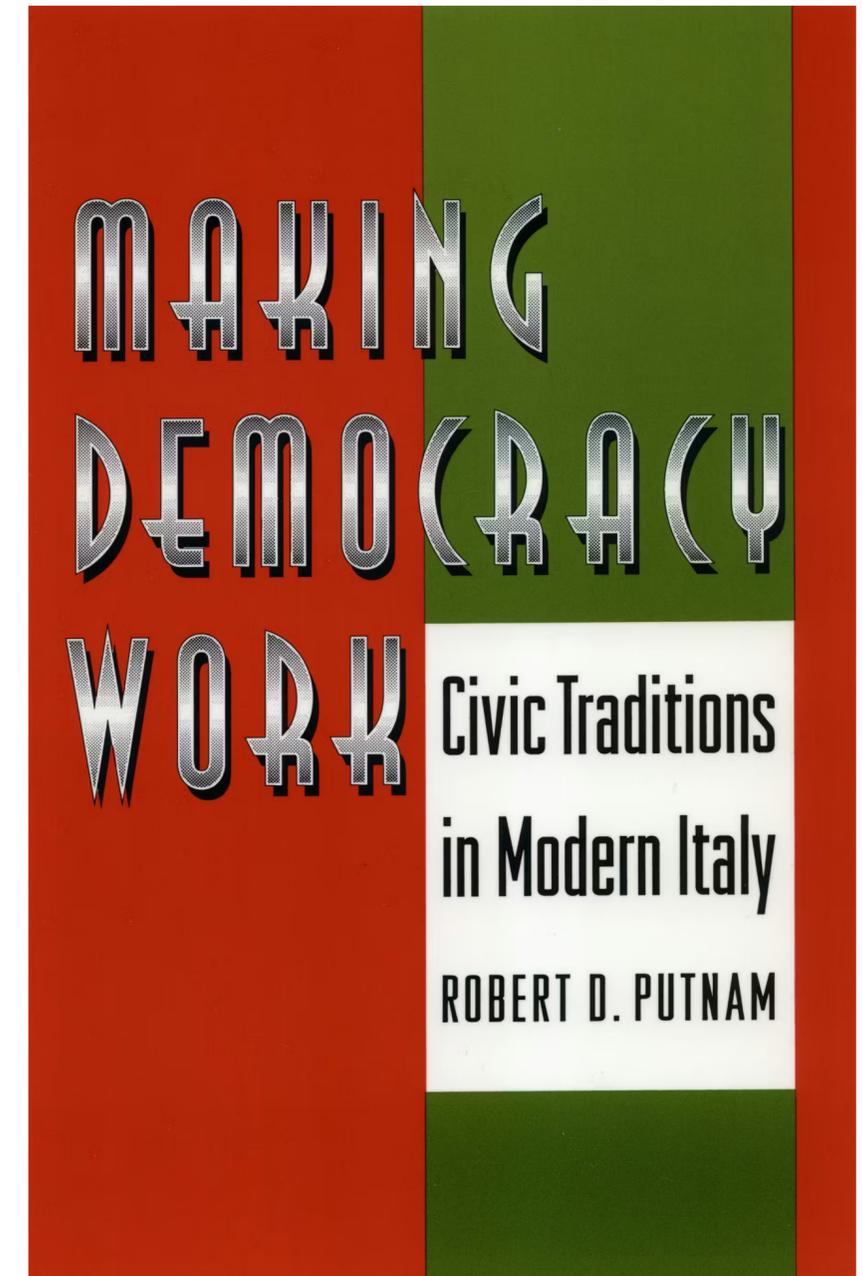
# Putnam & Social Capital

- More pessimistic take: something has been lost with the rise of "individualism". This something is **social capital**.

- "The features of social life — networks, norms, and trust — that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (*Bowling Alone*)

- "Norms of generalised reciprocity and networks of civic engagement" (*Making Democracy Work*)

- While individuals may be more autonomous than before, they are less socially connected **in ways that sustain democratic life**.
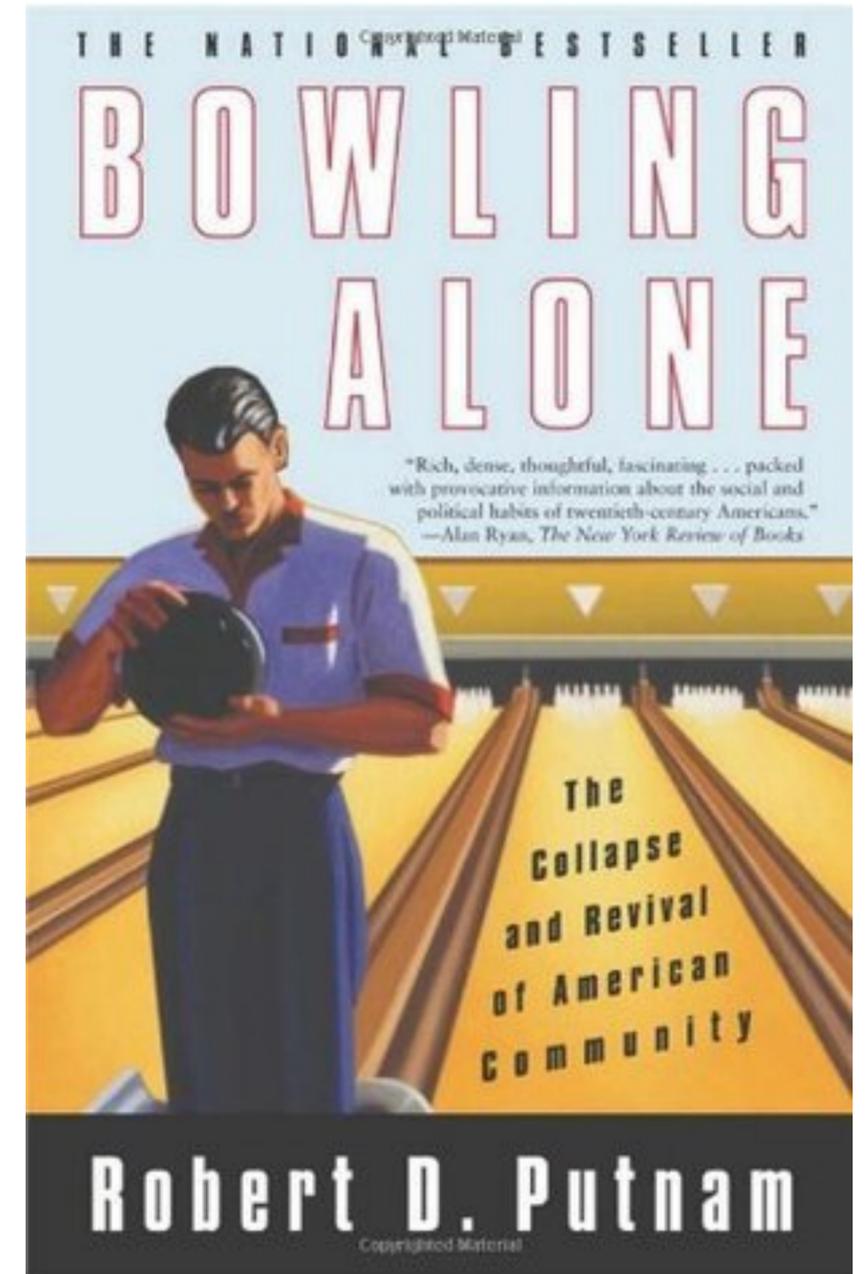
# Putnam & Social Capital

- In 1970, Italy instituted elected regions. In the North, they proved efficient and responsive; in the South, inefficient and corrupt. Putnam's explanation:

- Medieval city-states, guilds etc in the North →

  **associational life, self-government, social trust** →

  citizens can organise collectively to monitor officials → responsive democracy

- Feudalism in the South →**Low trust, loyalty to family or patron (not community)** → citizens seek private benefits, not public goods → low levels of institutional performance.
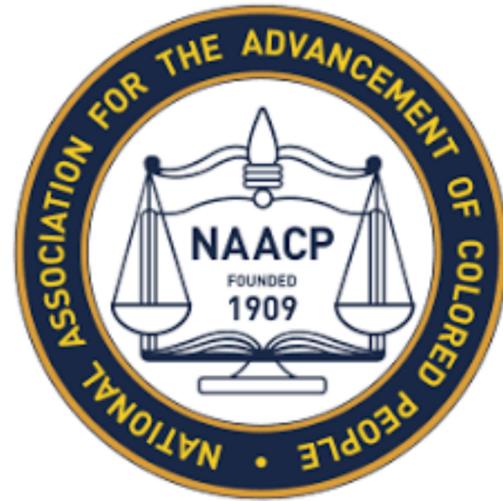
# Putnam & Social Capital

- Two types of social capital (not *always* good):

  - **Bonding (within-group)**: ethnic fraternal groups, country/ alumni clubs, homeowners' associations.

  - **Bridging (between-groups)**: trade unions, charities, parent-teacher associations, sports leagues.

- They build trust (or do they just *express* it?), which makes collective action possible. They are also "schools for democracy," develop an "expanded sense of self-interest."

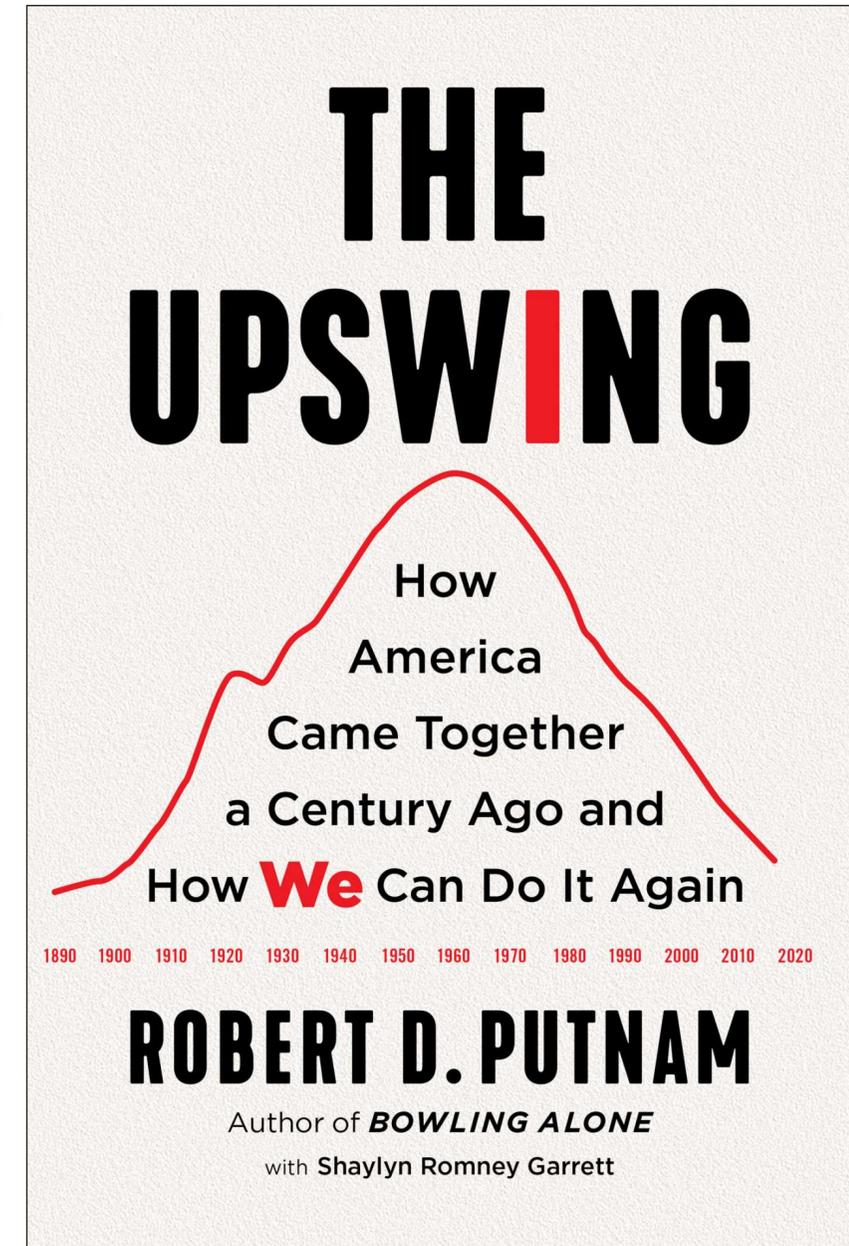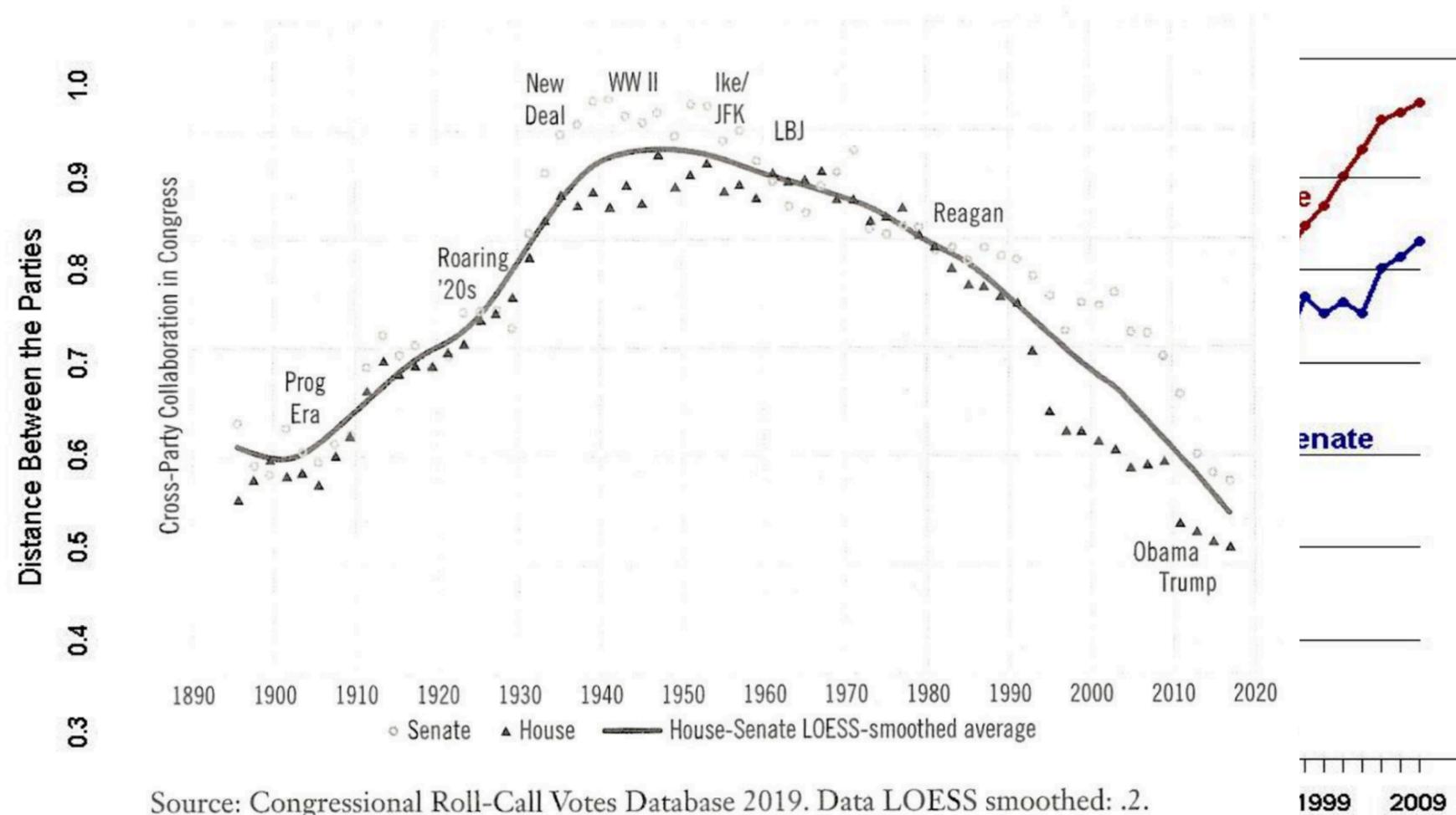- Documents a decline of these networks in late 20th century US.

# Putnam & Social Capital

# Putnam & Social Capital

- Longer term view: I—We—I arc in American democracy.

- Trends in collectivism and individualism related to economic equality and political choices: lessons from the 'Progressive Era'



FIGURE 3.1: CROSS-PARTY COLLABORATION IN CONGRESS, 1895–2017

New Deal  WW II  Ike/JFK  LBJ  Reagan  Roaring '20s  Prog Era  Obama Trump

Distance Between the Parties

Cross-Party Collaboration in Congress

○ Senate  ▲ House  — House-Senate LOESS-smoothed average

Source: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database 2019. Data LOESS smoothed: .2.



THE UPSWING

How America Came Together a Century Ago and How **We** Can Do It Again

ROBERT D. PUTNAM

Author of *BOWLING ALONE*

with Shaylyn Romney Garrett

# Facing Up to Backsliding

- If democracy is sustained by a certain type of culture, are people responsible for its current state?

- **Democratic deconsolidation** (Foa and Mounck, 2016): newer generations are losing commitment to democratic norms and institutions.

## The kids are alt-right

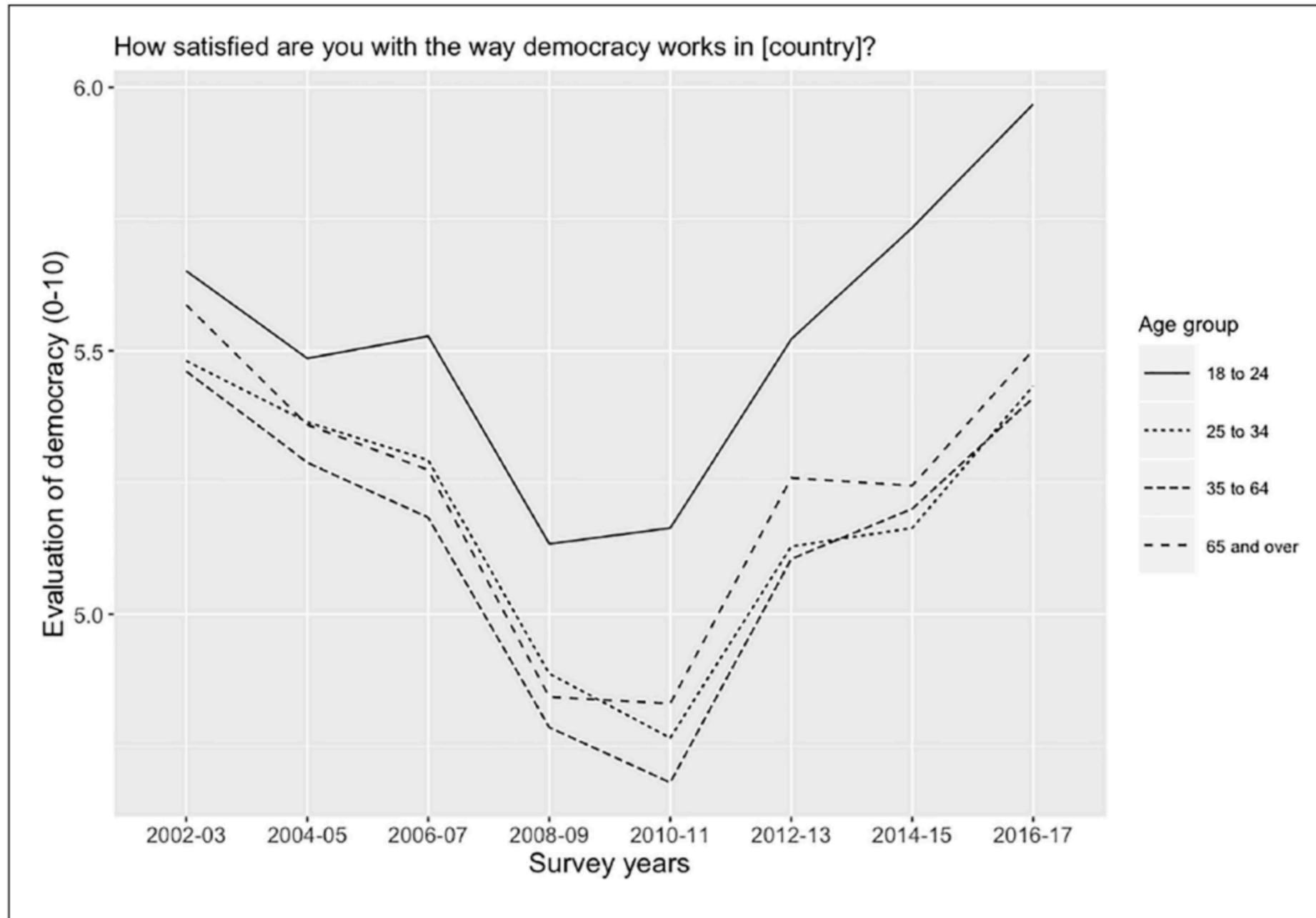*Outside the Anglosphere, right-wing populism is a youth movement*

FEATURES  By Sebastian Milbank   May 2023

**More than half of Gen Z believe Britain should be ruled by a dictator with no elections, new poll shows - while one in three want the army in charge**
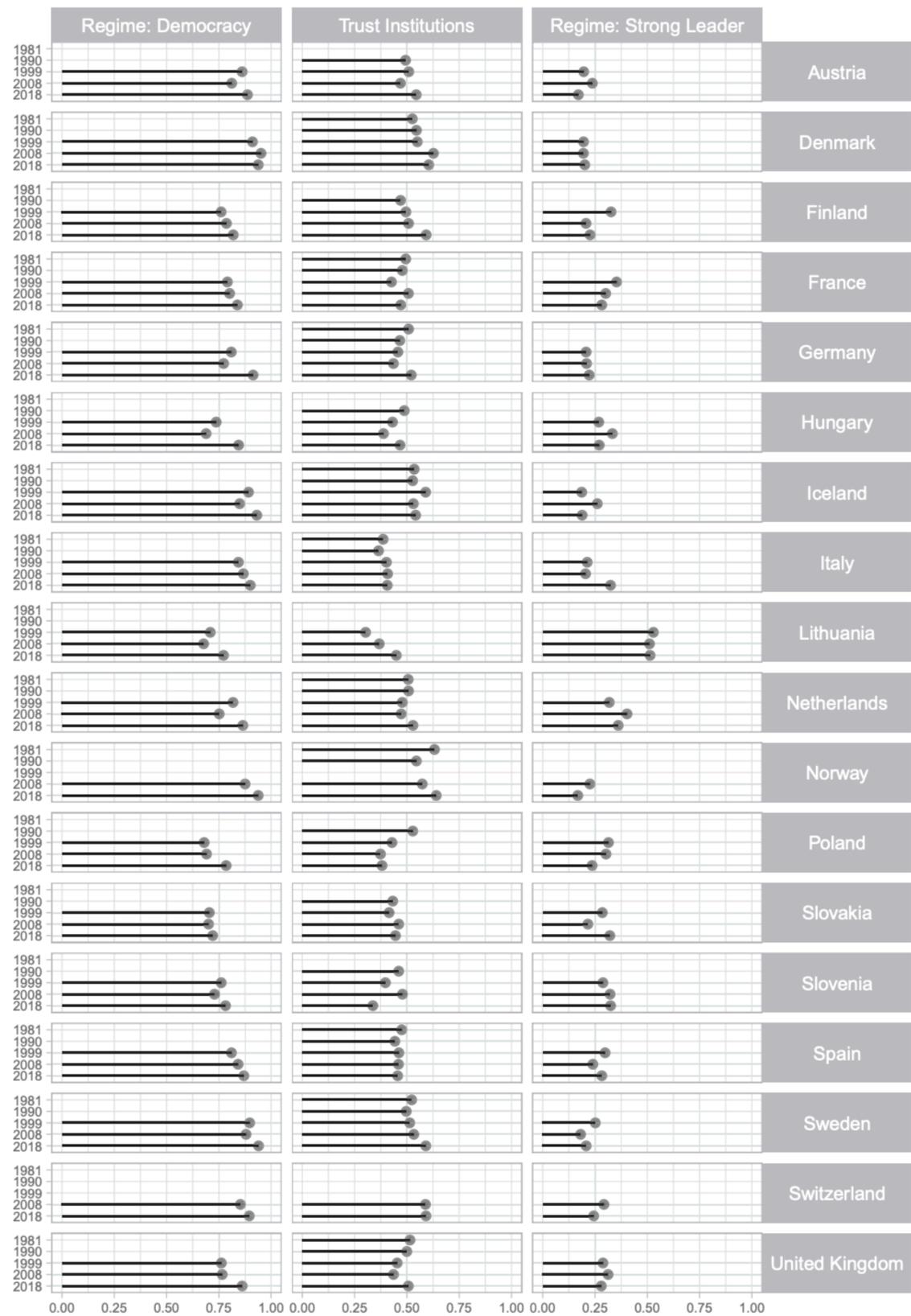
- READ MORE: God makes a comeback in Gen Z: Those in teens and early 20s are half as likely to call themselves atheists compared to their parents, poll shows
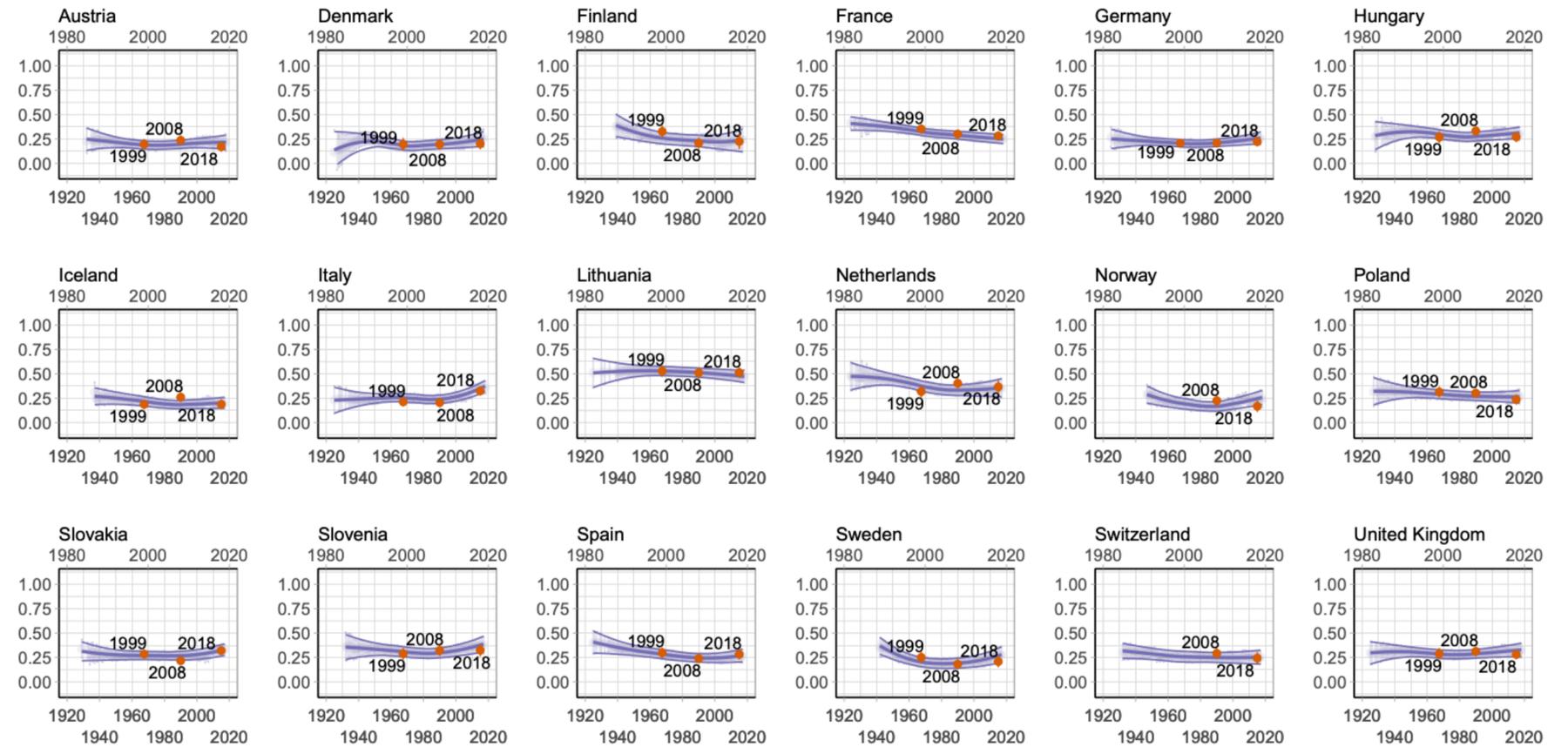
# Very weak evidence…



**Figure 1.** Evaluations of democracy among Europeans since 2002. ESS waves 1–8, ($N$ = 353,998).

- Zilinsky, Jan. "Democratic deconsolidation revisited: Young Europeans are not dissatisfied with democracy." *Research & Politics* 6.1 (2019): 2053168018814332.

**Figure 1.** Trends in average levels of democratic support over time

Note: "Regime: democracy": evaluation of "having a democratic political system" as a good or bad way of governing a country. "Trust institutions:" Summary index of trust in national parliament, justice system and civil service. "Regime: strong leader": evaluation of "having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections" as a good or bad way of governing a country.
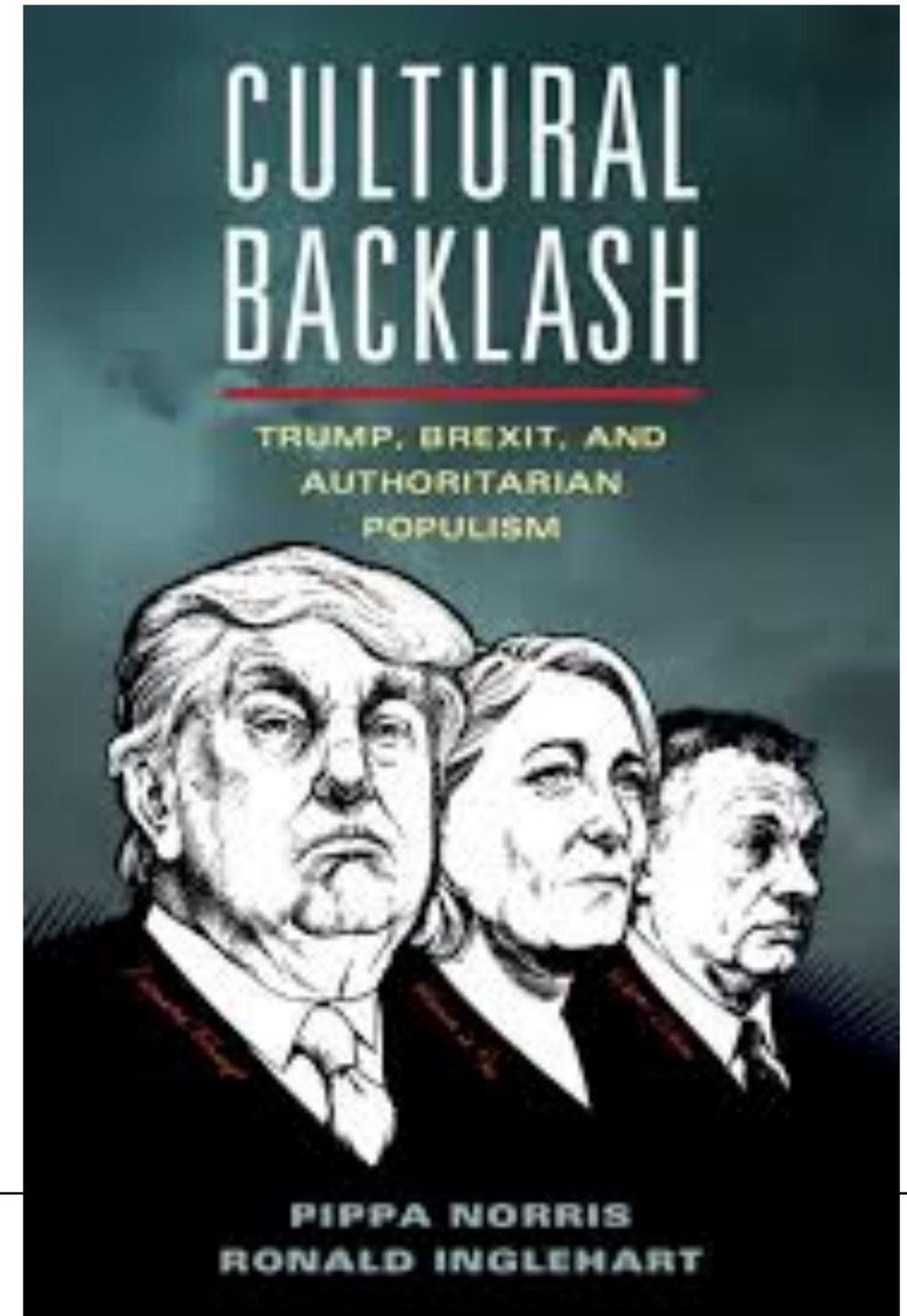


**Figure 4.** Period and cohort effects on authoritarian regime preferences

*Note*: the figure shows predicted mean values for period and cohort effects derived from GAM analyses using an observed value approach with simultaneous confidence intervals. For the cohort plots in blue, smoothing splines are overlaid on the yearly predictions displayed in the background. Red dots represent period effects, showing predicted mean levels in the respective survey year.

- Wuttke, A., Gavras, K., & Schoen, H. (2022). Have Europeans grown tired of democracy? New evidence from eighteen consolidated democracies, 1981–2018. *British Journal of Political Science, 52*(1), 416-428.

# Facing Up to Backsliding

- Cultural backlash?

- Maybe the kids have become *too* post-materialist and liberal.

- Those who are less so (older generations) experience this value change as a **status loss**, and flock to authoritarian parties to stop it.



CULTURAL BACKLASH

TRUMP, BREXIT, AND AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM

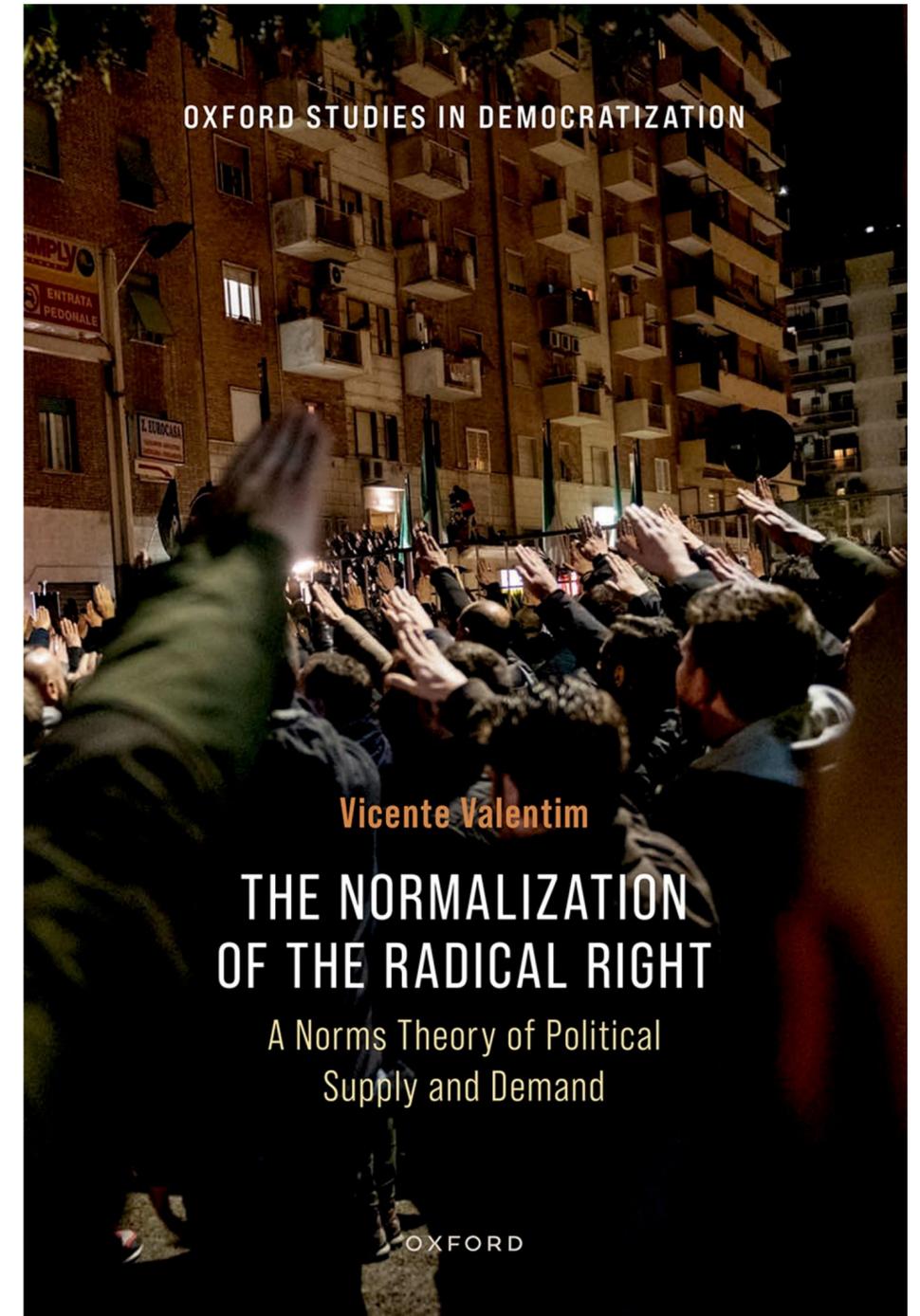PIPPA NORRIS
RONALD INGLEHART

# Also not a great explanation

"In many ways, *Cultural Backlash* tells a comforting story: if authoritarian populism is a movement of older cohorts, generational replacement will attenuate the problem. […] In fact, **those generations that the theory assumes to be more socially liberal are more likely to vote for authoritarian-populist parties.** Populism, one may conclude, is probably here to stay." (Schäfer, 2023)

"Across Europe, attitudes regarding immigration,European integration, political trust, and satisfaction with democracy have remained largely unchanged over the past two decades. In the two European countries where democracy has eroded significantly, Hungary and Poland, "backsliding" has been engineered by politicians and imposed from above, **not in response to any mandate from voters.**" (Bartels, 2023)

- Schäfer, A. (2022). Cultural backlash? How (not) to explain the rise of authoritarian populism. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 1977-1993. Bartels, L. M. (2023). Democracy erodes from the top: Leaders, citizens, and the challenge of populism in Europe.
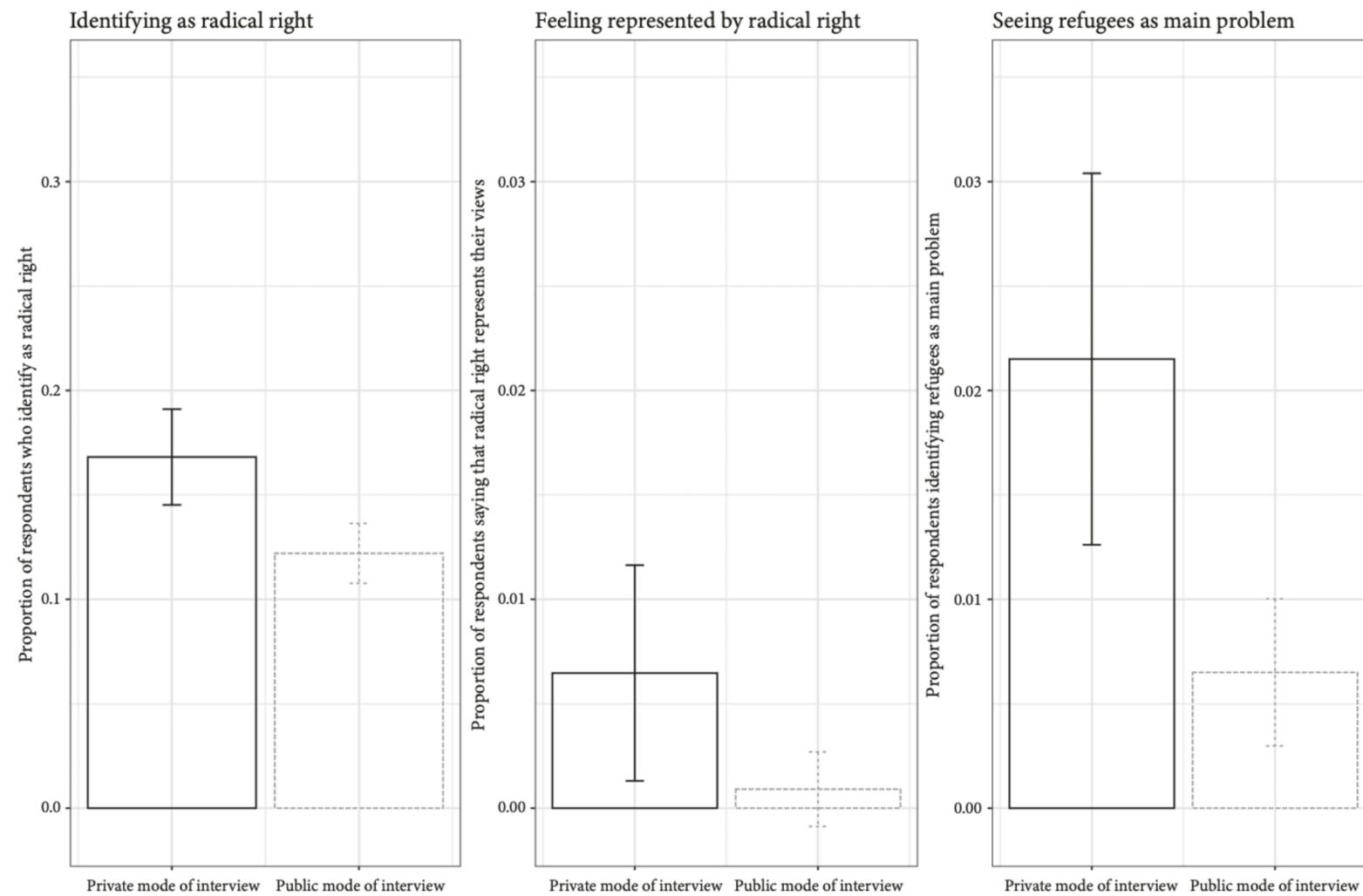
# Valentim

- What has changed is not people's attitudes to democracy — the 'political culture' — but the willingness of authoritarians to act on them.

- The prime mover is on the "demand side": Political actors — both radical and mainstream — have made anti-democratic behaviour **acceptable**.

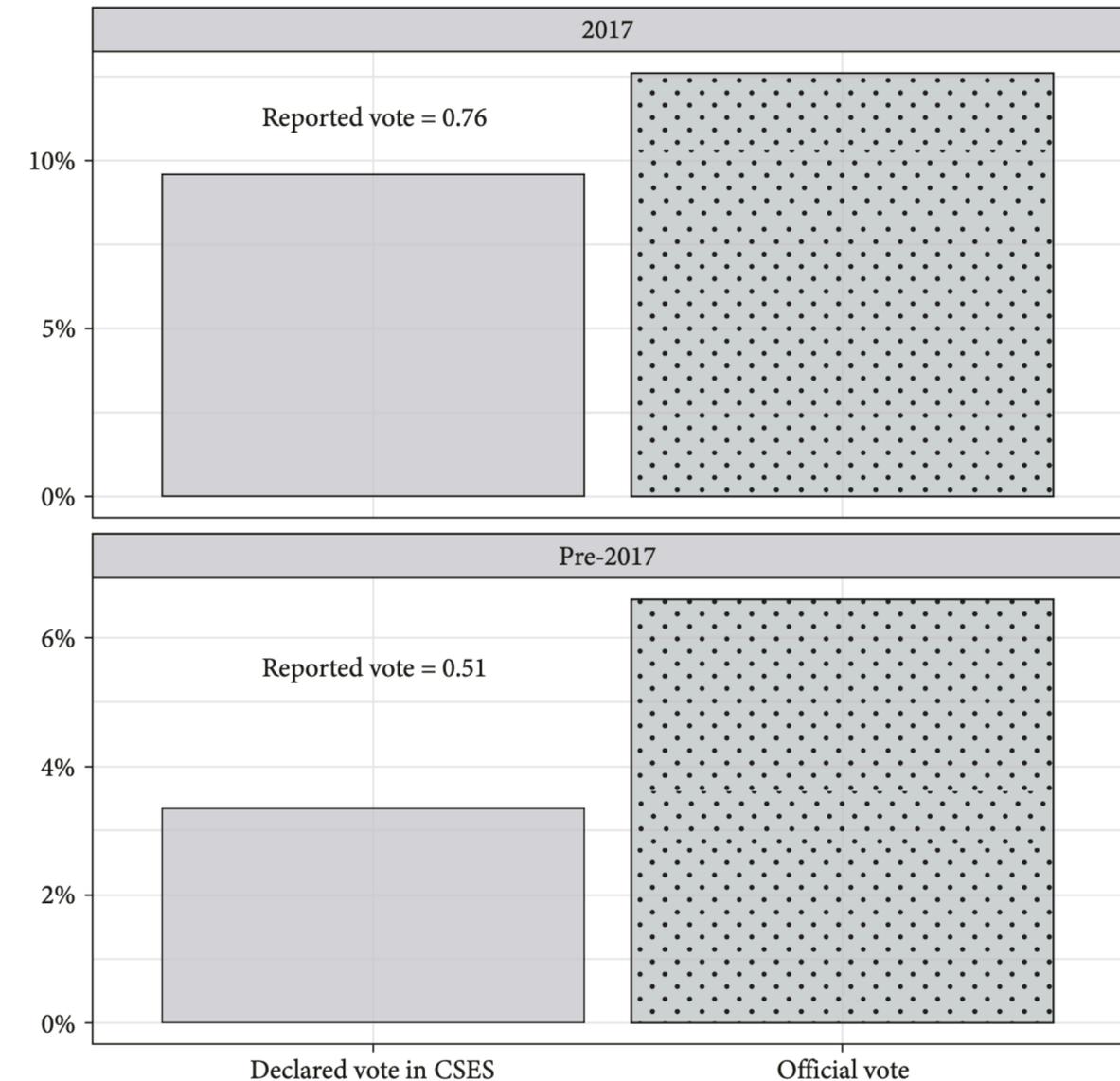- Social norms can explain change even in the absence of a change in preferences.

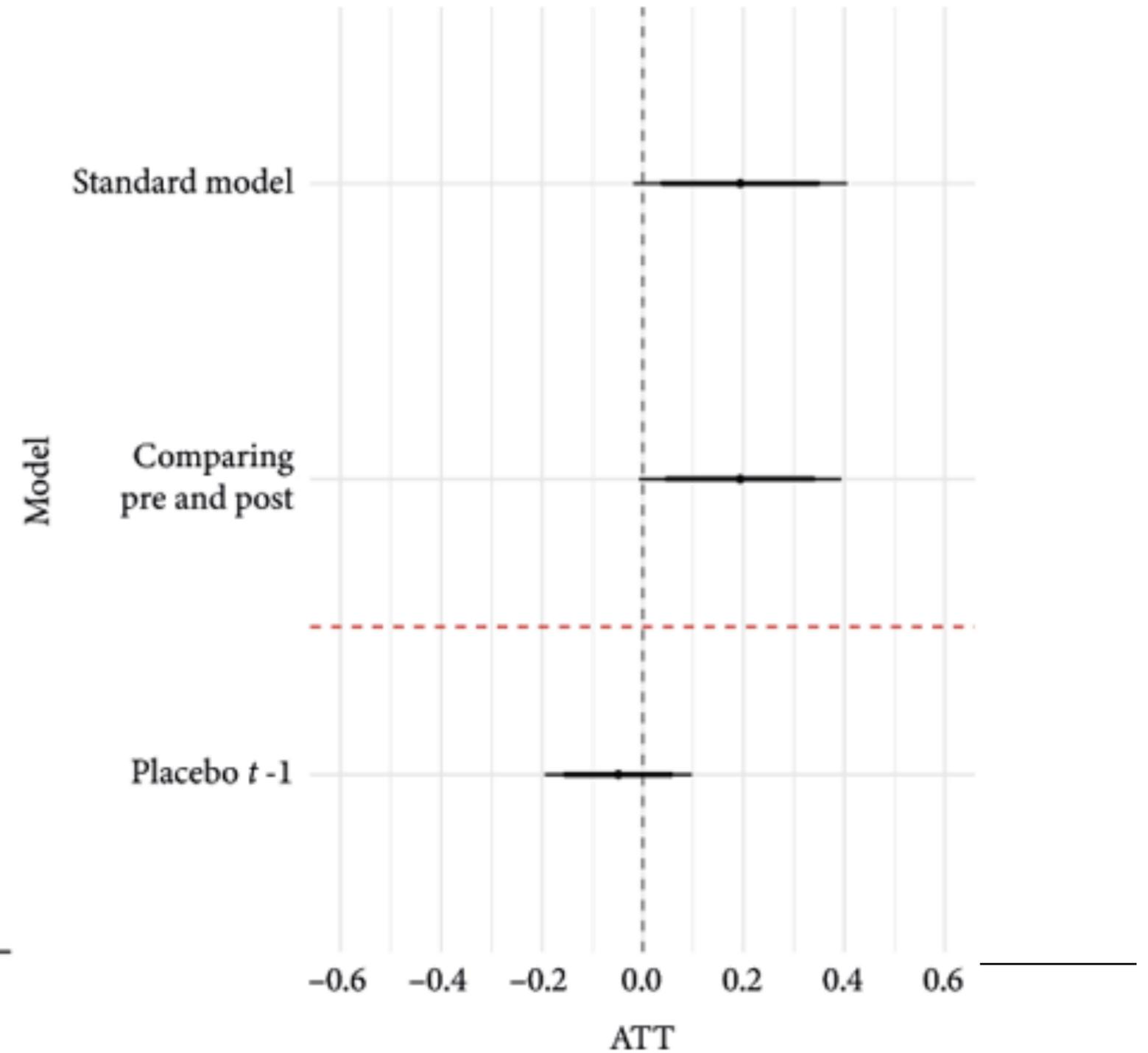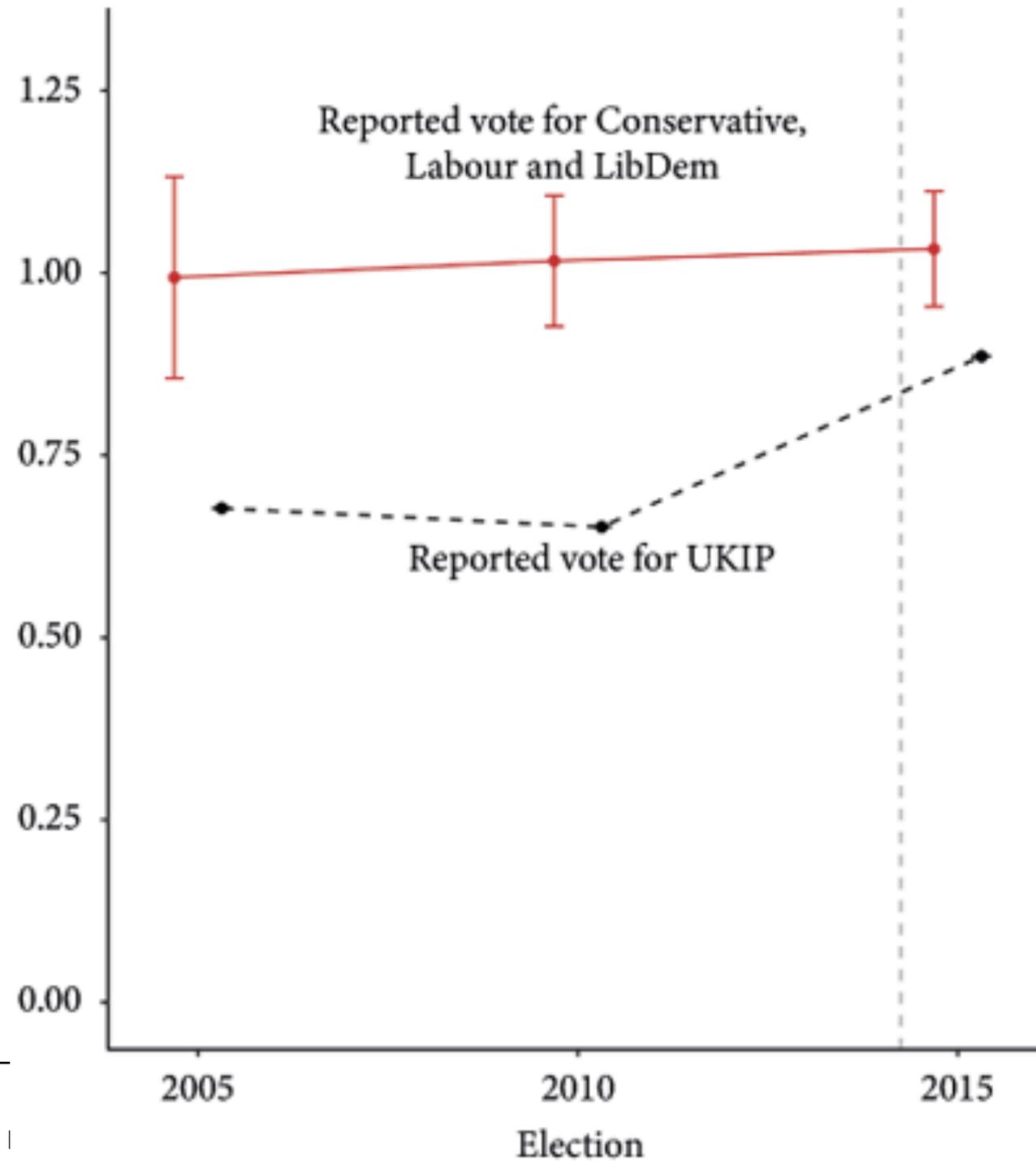# Valentim: Germany

2002

2017



**Figure 8.1** In the latency phase, radical-right support and associated views are often not expressed in public behavior (preference falsification)



**Figure 8.7** When the AfD made its electoral breakthrough in 2017, radical-right supporters became more likely to publicly admit their support

# Valentim: UK

# Summing up…

- Political culture: upstream or downstream from institutions? Probably both.

- Value shift from allegiance to assertiveness, from concern for material and economic security to 'post-material' concerns, from collectivism to individualism: different — and contradictory — implications for democracy.

- Hard to square (1) the role of the public in enabling democratic backsliding with (2) unclear or positive generational and time trends in attitudes to democracy.

# Thank you very much for your kind attention!