

POLITICAL CULTURE: Habitual patterns of thinking and behaving that characterize a given society. The particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each society is embedded.

DEMOCRACY

Importance of the Individual

Consent of the governed

General equality

Process oriented – majority rule/minority rights

No absolute truth

CAPITALISM

Individual decisionmaking and ownership

Competition

Fair process

Minimum of gov't interference

THE AMERICAN CREED

- Elements of the American political culture in idealized form.
- The actual accomplishment of these items often falls short of this idealized commitment.

LIBERTY: the principle that individuals should be free to act and think as they choose provided such actions do not unreasonably infringe on the freedom and well-being of others.

SELF-GOVERNMENT: the principle that the people are the ultimate source of governing authority and legitimacy.

EQUALITY: individuals have equal moral worth and should be provided equal treatment under the law. (Equal opportunity, but not necessarily equality of outcome.)

INDIVIDUALISM: commitment to personal initiative, self-sufficiency, and material accumulation.

DIVERSITY: individual differences should be respected and are a source of strength for the general society.

UNITY: although diverse, America is ultimately comprised of one people who form an indivisible union.

CONTEMPORARY FACTORS SHAPING CULTURAL ATTITUDES

- POPULATION DIVERSITY
- GEOGRAPHIC SIZE
- RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY
- WEALTH (AND EXPECTATIONS OF WEALTH)
- TECHNOLOGY
- URBANIZATION

GENERAL CULTURAL DESCRIPTION OF US

HIGH COMMITMENT TO INDIVIDUALISM

GENERAL DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT, BUT
BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF
GOVERNMENT

COMPETITIVE AND MATERIALISTIC

PRAGMATIC AND PRACTICAL

POLITICALLY OPTIMISTIC

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

- **BUTTRESSES LEGITIMACY**
- **PROVIDES GUIDELINES FOR
“ACCEPTABLE” ACTIONS**
- **REINFORCED BY SYMBOLS OF
NATIONAL IDENTITY**