



# The Roots of American Exceptionalism

*Charles Lockhart*

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## **The Roots of American Exceptionalism** Charles Lockhart

How do United States public policies differ from those of other wealthy democracies? Why do they differ? *The Roots of American Exceptionalism* draws on societies' unique histories, distinctive paths of institutional development and contrasting cultures to explain why they adopt different policies for common problems. It compares the United States with Sweden on tax policy, Canada on financing medical care, France on abortion policy, and Japan on immigration. The book shows that American public policies across these four areas fit a pattern of embodying the fundamental beliefs and value priorities of a particular culture: individualism. And while American public policies are rational from this cultural perspective, the relative strengths and weaknesses of this culturally-constrained rationality are contrasted with those of alternative, more egalitarian and/or hierarchical, culturally-constrained rationalities which prevail in Sweden, Canada, France and Japan.

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