Civilizational Balance as the Key to Flourishing

A Proxy-Based Operationalization of the Strüver Model
A Diagnostic Framework for Identifying and Preventing Societal Dysfunctions

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Abstract

This paper introduces the Strüver Model, a novel conceptual framework designed to explain why civilizations flourish, stagnate, or decline. Departing from sectoral theories that focus on isolated variables such as capital accumulation, property rights, or social trust, the Strüver Model posits that civilizational success depends on the dynamic balance between three fundamental pillars: morality, knowledge, and institutional strength. Each pillar must maintain an internal equilibrium favoring freedom over constraint (ideally approximating a 70/30 ratio), while also remaining in meta-balance with the other two.

The model's key innovation lies in its holistic approach: it captures not only the conditions within individual societal domains but also the interdependencies and feedback mechanisms between them. This systemic perspective allows for the identification of balance or imbalance as the true drivers of societal outcomes.

To operationalize the model empirically, the paper proposes using internationally recognized proxy indicators (e.g., Rule of Law Index, Economic Freedom Index, Academic Freedom Index, Pew Research indicators). This enables comparative analyses across historical and contemporary cases.

The paper illustrates the model through three case studies: Singapore after 1965, West Germany after 1949, and present-day Germany. These examples demonstrate the model's diagnostic power and its capacity to detect different types of societal imbalance — whether rooted in authoritarian overreach (as in historical cases) or in contemporary overdominance of the knowledge pillar, manifesting as lobby-driven governance and reduced institutional autonomy.

Importantly, the Strüver Model is not only retrospective but also prognostic. By systematically monitoring balance conditions across these three pillars and their interactions, policymakers could anticipate emerging dysfunctions and develop evidence-based strategies for recalibration, thereby preserving civilizational resilience.

Civilizational Balance as the Key to Flourishing: A Proxy-Based Operationalization of the Strüver Model

Introduction: Research Question and Relevance

The question of why civilizations flourish, stagnate, or decline is one of the central concerns of political theory, historical analysis, and economic research. Since antiquity, philosophers and economists have sought to identify the factors that explain societal success — from Plato and Aristotle to modern classics such as Adam Smith, Montesquieu, and Max Weber. In the contemporary period, formal-analytical models prevail that are either economic (e.g., the Solow model for growth dynamics) or institutional-economic (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson's theory of "inclusive institutions") in their orientation. These models succeed in quantitatively operationalizing individual success factors — capital accumulation, property rights protection, education expenditure — and show clear correlations with growth indicators such as GDP per capita.

However, they all fail at a fundamental level: they do not capture the full range of societal dynamics. Moral order, cultural cohesion, trust, knowledge production, and their relationship to the strength of state institutions are addressed only partially and in isolation. To date, no established model provides an integrative, empirically operationalizable theory that explains not merely economic success but the overall "achievement of civilization."

This is precisely where Strüver's "Calibration Logic" thesis intervenes. This thesis formulates a tripartite basic structure of societies: every successful civilization rests on three fundamental pillars — moral order, knowledge, and institutional strength — each of which must be internally calibrated (in each case allowing more freedom than constraint, ideally approximating a 70/30 ratio) and must also stand in dynamic equilibrium with one another (meta-balance). A civilization becomes dysfunctional as soon as any pillar falls out of balance, either internally or in relation to the others; conversely, it flourishes when all three pillars simultaneously approximate this balance.

The aim of this paper is to advance this theoretical approach from the realm of philosophical plausibility to an operational analytical framework. To achieve this, existing proxy indicators from internationally recognized sources (OECD, World Justice Project, Transparency International, Pew Research, World Values Survey) will be utilized to empirically capture the internal balance of each pillar as well as the meta-balance between them.

The paper uses as illustrative case studies West Germany after 1945 and Singapore after 1965 — two historically very different societies that, despite difficult starting conditions, achieved exceptional economic and institutional success. Using a qualitative-quantitative hybrid methodology, this study examines the extent to which their respective trajectories of ascent can be attributed to improvements in this calibration. This paper thus pursues a dual objective: first, to provide empirical plausibility for Strüver's thesis; and second, to pave the way for a broader, comparative application of a new framework for analyzing civilizational dynamics.

Theoretical Background: Models for Explaining Civilizational Success

The scholarly engagement with the causes of economic growth and societal success has, since the twentieth century, yielded a series of prominent theoretical models. These approaches have uncovered important partial correlations and have often been empirically validated — but they remain selective and sectoral: they explain economic development primarily through isolated variables such as capital, technology, or institutions, rather than as the complex interplay of political, moral, and epistemic order.

🔹 The Solow Model: Focus on Capital and Technology

Robert Solow's neoclassical growth model (1956) continues to dominate economic growth theory. In its basic form, it explains economic growth through three variables: capital accumulation, population growth, and technological progress. Technological progress is introduced as an exogenous factor explaining productivity increases not attributable to capital or labor.

Strengths of the model:

- It offers a clearly quantifiable framework: capital stock, labor hours, and "Total Factor Productivity" (TFP) are measurable empirical quantities.
- Its empirical application has demonstrated robust correlations between capital accumulation, investments in technology, and growth.

Weaknesses:

- The Solow model abstracts entirely from institutional, cultural, or moral factors.
- It does not explain why some societies are more innovation-friendly or capital-productive than others.

🔹 Institutional Economics: Property Rights and "Inclusive Institutions"

Douglas North (1990) and later Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (*Why Nations Fail*, 2012) introduced institutional explanations:

- "Good institutions" — defined as protection of property rights, rule of law, and political inclusion — enable economic success.
- Acemoglu and Robinson differentiate between:
    - *Inclusive institutions*: create incentives for innovation, economic participation, and property protection → success.
    - *Extractive institutions*: serve only elites, inhibit broad participation → failure.

Strengths:

- High explanatory power for divergences between formally similar economies (e.g., North vs. South Korea).
- Measurability through governance indicators (e.g., Rule of Law Index, Corruption Perception Index).

Weaknesses:

- Institutional economics remains “institution-centric”: it does not account for how moral norms, knowledge production, and cultural cohesion interact with institutions.
- It fails to capture the dynamics between different societal subsystems.

🔹 **Social Capital Theories: Trust as a Resource**

Robert Putnam (1993) and Francis Fukuyama (1995) argue that trust and networks of cooperation — social capital — are central drivers of economic and political development.

Strengths:

- Explanatory power for regional differences despite similar institutional frameworks (e.g., Northern vs. Southern Italy).
- Emphasis on norms and informal institutions.

Weaknesses:

- Social capital is treated as an isolated variable, not integrated into a comprehensive societal model.
- No systemic analysis of the balance between state, moral order, and knowledge systems.

Limitations of all three approaches:

All three models — Solow, institutional economics, social capital — offer valuable partial perspectives but share fundamental limitations:

- No comprehensive analysis of moral order: morality appears at most as an “informal institution”.
- Knowledge production as a black box: innovation is typically treated as exogenous (Solow) or as a consequence of “good institutions” (Acemoglu/Robinson).

- Lack of a meta-balance diagnosis: no model addresses how state strength, moral order, and knowledge systems interact and mutually stabilize or destabilize each other.

🔹 **Comparison with Strüver's Approach:**

Strüver's model fundamentally differs:

Holistic perspective:
It integrates three fundamental axes:

- *Strength*: institutions, state, order.
- *Morality*: normative foundations, pluralism, moral cohesion.
- *Knowledge*: innovative capacity, academic and economic freedom.

Calibration logic:
Each pillar must be internally balanced (freedom outweighing constraint, approximately 70/30) and simultaneously maintain meta-balance with the other two pillars.

Meta-level as diagnostic tool:
Strüver analyzes not just static conditions but interdependencies:

- When one pillar becomes disproportionately dominant (e.g., religion → morality; military → strength; economic elites → knowledge), this destabilizes the entire civilization.

This model therefore offers, for the first time:

- A comprehensive framework for diagnosing societal balance conditions.
- The possibility of empirical analysis using proxy data, without being reduced solely to economic variables.
- An integrative perspective treating moral, institutional, and epistemic dimensions as co-equal.

Summary:

While the Solow model, institutional economics, and social capital theories remain sectoral in focus, Strüver's model provides a qualitative-quantitative framework for the holistic diagnosis of civilizational success — across all three axes and with explicit consideration of their interdependence at the meta-level.

Conceptualization of the Strüver Model

The Strüver thesis formulates a novel, integrative concept for explaining civilizational success that goes beyond existing economic or institutional models. It is based on three central theoretical components: the three pillars of morality, knowledge, and strength; an internal calibration principle for each pillar (the 70/30 rule); and a meta-balance mechanism for controlling interdependencies.

🔹 The Three Pillars: Morality, Knowledge, Strength

Strüver posits that every functioning civilization necessarily rests upon three fundamental "pillars":

Morality: The normative foundation of society, encompassing values, religions, worldviews, ethics, and social cohesion. Morality provides individual orientation, frames discourse, and legitimizes shared norms.

Knowledge: The society's capacity for innovation and intellectual freedom. This pillar includes scientific independence, education systems, entrepreneurial creativity, and market openness. It ensures adaptability and progress.

Strength: State order, institutions, separation of powers, and the state's monopoly on legitimate force. This pillar creates stability, security, and the legal foundation for both moral pluralism and knowledge freedom.

These three axes do not form a hierarchical order but are equal in rank and in constant interaction.

🔹 Internal Calibration Principle: The 70/30 Rule

Each pillar must be internally calibrated so that freedom dominates over order but is nonetheless stabilized by a certain degree of order. Strüver formulates this as a heuristic ideal:

"Approximately 70% freedom, approximately 30% order per pillar."

In concrete terms:

- In the **morality pillar**: a pluralistic value system must prevail; individual morality must have space but not devolve into arbitrariness; minimal stabilizing norms must exist.
- In the **knowledge pillar**: academic and market freedom must dominate, but quality assurance standards and fairness mechanisms are necessary.
- In the **strength pillar**: individual freedoms (freedom of speech, rule of law) must shape the institutional framework, but the state must not abandon its core task of ensuring stability.

🔹 Meta-Balance as the Key Mechanism

Beyond internal calibration, Strüver posits a second level: the balance between the pillars themselves.

The guiding principle here is:

- No pillar may dominate or suppress the functioning of the other pillars.
- Interactions must be calibrated so that the three pillars stabilize but do not obstruct each other.

The model acknowledges that temporary imbalances occur regularly, but a flourishing system adjusts itself — either deliberately or emergently — back into an equilibrium.

🔹 **Hypothesis**

From this conceptualization follows the central hypothesis:

- Societies flourish when all three pillars are internally and interactively balanced, with freedom structurally dominating but functionally stabilized by order (idealized as 70/30).
- Societies stagnate or decline when one or more pillars are internally dysfunctional (e.g., extreme authoritarianism or anarchic fragmentation) or when one pillar dominates the meta-balance (e.g., theocracy, oligarchy, dictatorship).

This understanding of equilibrium provides a theoretical explanation for the rise and fall of societies that transcends purely economic or institutional arguments.

🔹 **Operationalization Concept: Proxy Indicators**

To make this thesis testable, the model proposes using existing international proxy indicators for each axis:

For the **strength pillar**:

- Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project)
- Civil Liberties Score (Freedom House)
- Military expenditures as % of GDP (SIPRI)

For the **morality pillar**:

- Government Restrictions on Religion Index (Pew Research)
- World Values Survey: tolerance indicators

- Religious legislation (e.g., blasphemy laws)

For the **knowledge pillar**:

- Economic Freedom Index (Heritage Foundation)
- Academic Freedom Index (V-Dem)
- Research expenditures as % of GDP (OECD/UNESCO)

In addition, proxy indicators are identified for meta-balance to make dominance relationships measurable:

Meta-Balance Proxies:

- **Lobbying Index (OECD Regulatory Environment, Corruption Perception Index):** measures encroachment of knowledge → strength (economic elites "capture" the state).
- **Repression Index (Freedom House Civil Liberties, Press Freedom Index, Academic Freedom Index):** measures encroachment of strength → knowledge/morality (authoritarian state suppressing the public sphere and research).
- **Religious Dominance Index (Pew Restrictions, number of religiously motivated laws):** measures encroachment of morality → strength/knowledge (theocratic structures).

Summary:

Strüver's model provides an entirely new analytical toolkit:

- Three pillars with clearly defined content,
- An internal calibration principle (freedom over order),
- Meta-balance as the decisive steering criterion,
- Proxy-based operationalization → enabling both qualitative and quantitative diagnoses of historical and contemporary societies.

This conceptual foundation will be tested in the following sections through two historical case studies: West Germany after 1945 and Singapore after 1965.

Thresholds and Balance Definition

To move beyond a purely conceptual statement of the 70/30 principle, it is necessary to define explicit thresholds that mark the boundary between stability and imbalance. The Strüver model assumes that sustainable societal balance emerges when approximately **70 percent of social energy and resources are directed toward individual freedom**, while **30 percent ensure stabilizing order**. This ratio is not understood as a rigid law, but as a functional calibration range.

Empirically, the balance is expected to remain stable as long as freedom fluctuates within a corridor of **60 to 80 percent**. Once freedom falls below **60 percent**, coercive order begins to dominate, resulting in authoritarian or restrictive structures that erode resilience over time. Conversely, when freedom exceeds **80 percent**, social fragmentation and individual disintegration undermine the coherence of institutions, producing instability through the absence of binding norms.

The thresholds therefore mark **critical tipping points**: below 60 percent, societies tend toward authoritarian consolidation; above 80 percent, they risk disintegration and loss of collective orientation. Within the 60–80 percent corridor, however, the model predicts the highest degree of resilience and long-term stability, as neither individual freedom nor ordering structure decisively overwhelms the other.

Table 1: Balance Thresholds in the Strüver Model

Balance Range (Freedom %)	Structural Condition	Expected Outcome
< 60 %	Dominance of order	Authoritarian consolidation, erosion of resilience
60–80 %	Calibrated balance (70/30)	Stability, resilience, long-term sustainability
> 80 %	Dominance of freedom	Fragmentation, institutional disintegration

Indicator Mapping by Pillar

Table 2: Indicators and Weighting in the Strüver Model

Pillar	Main Indicators (Proxy)	Weighting / Justification
Strength	– Rule of Law Index (WJP) – Civil Liberties (Freedom House) – Military Expenditure (% GDP, SIPRI)	*Rule of Law + Civil Liberties*: strong weight, as they directly capture institutional balance. *Military expenditure*: highly relevant if > 3–4 % GDP, as sign of Strength-dominance.
Morality	– Government Restrictions on Religion (Pew) – World Values Survey (Tolerance) – Religious Legislation (e.g., blasphemy laws)	*Restrictions + legislation*: very strong weight, as they directly signal normative dominance. *Tolerance surveys*: medium weight (culturally variable).
Knowledge	– Academic Freedom Index (V-Dem) – Economic Freedom Index (Heritage) – Research Expenditure (% GDP, OECD/UNESCO)	*Academic freedom*: strong weight, restrictions immediately destabilize balance. *Economic freedom*: medium. *R&D expenditure*: weaker, proxy for activity not balance.
Meta-Balance	– Lobbying Index (OECD) – Corruption Perceptions Index (TI) – Press Freedom Index (RSF)	*Lobbying*: very strong (Knowledge → Strength capture). *Press freedom*: very strong (Strength → Morality/Knowledge capture). *Religious dominance indicators*: strong (Morality → Strength/Knowledge capture).

Heuristic Summary

In sum, the Strüver model defines:

- Threshold corridor: 60–80 % freedom as stability zone; < 60 % = authoritarian, > 80 % = fragmented.
- Aggregation logic: Mean-based, with outlier correction (> 15 points deviation).
- Indicator mapping: 2–3 per pillar, weighted by relevance, with meta-level safeguards against cross-pillar dominance.

Thus, the model provides not only a heuristic optimum (70/30) but also a practical framework for empirical application, enabling calibration of societal balance through internationally measurable indicators.

Methods

Case Selection

The study employs a comparative case design focusing on West Germany (1949–1970), Singapore (1965–1990), and contemporary Germany (2000–2025). These cases were chosen for three reasons:

1. Contrastive trajectories: West Germany and Singapore represent different cultural and political contexts that nevertheless achieved high levels of flourishing, whereas contemporary Germany illustrates emergent imbalance.
2. Temporal comparability: Each case covers a period of roughly 20–25 years, allowing the dynamics of balance and dysbalance to become visible across decades rather than isolated moments.
3. Analytical leverage: Together, the cases enable evaluation of the Strüver Model across both historically stabilized and currently volatile contexts, testing its diagnostic and prognostic potential.

Data Sources

Indicators were drawn from internationally recognized, publicly available datasets to ensure comparability and replicability:

- Strength pillar: Rule of Law Index (World Bank Governance Indicators), Civil Liberties Index (Freedom House), Military Expenditure (% of GDP, SIPRI).
- Morality pillar: Government Restrictions on Religion (Pew), World Values Survey (Tolerance scores), Religious Legislation (e.g. blasphemy laws).
- Knowledge pillar: Academic Freedom Index (V-Dem/FAU), Economic Freedom Index (Heritage Foundation), Research and Development Expenditure (% of GDP, OECD/UNESCO).
- Meta-balance indicators: Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International), Lobbying registers and indices (OECD/EU), Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders).

All indicators were normalized to a 0–100 scale, with higher scores indicating greater freedom and lower scores indicating stronger constraint.

Operationalization of the Pillars

Each pillar is represented by 2–3 normalized indicators, aggregated using the simple arithmetic mean to avoid overweighting any single measure. Balance within a pillar is defined as a freedom-to-constraint ratio between 60 and 80 percent freedom.

- Scores below 60 indicate authoritarian consolidation, in which constraint dominates.
- Scores above 80 indicate fragmentation, in which excessive freedom undermines coherence.
- The optimum heuristic lies at 70/30, representing the most resilient calibration.

An outlier rule is applied: if any single indicator deviates more than 15 points beyond the balance corridor, the pillar is flagged as potentially imbalanced even if the mean still lies between 60 and 80. This captures early warning signs that could be masked by averaging.

Meta-Balance Within Nations

Meta-balance is defined as the condition in which no pillar systematically dominates the others. A dominance flag is raised when one pillar exceeds the mean of the other two pillars by more than 15 points for at least three consecutive years. This rule ensures that systemic imbalance is not hidden by apparent balance within individual pillars.

Civilizational Meta-Balance

Beyond national comparison, the model also evaluates balance at the civilizational level. Balance requires that all three pillars operate at the same systemic level. In the current epoch, however, a structural asymmetry has emerged:

- The knowledge pillar is increasingly globalized and consolidated (through transnational corporations, international science, and global economic structures).
- The morality and strength pillars remain fragmented and nationally embedded.

This mismatch produces a fundamental dysbalance at the civilizational level: even where nations appear internally balanced, they are destabilized externally by the global dominance of knowledge. The Strüver Model thus allows diagnosis of both intra-national balance and transnational structural shifts that undermine systemic resilience.

Empirical Operationalization: Proxy-Based Measurement Approaches

In order for Strüver's model to serve as an analytical instrument beyond the philosophical level, it requires robust operationalization: the balance conditions of the three pillars, as well as the meta-balance among them, must be approximated using internationally recognized indicators. The goal is a methodologically consistent, comparable approach that makes qualitative concepts such as "balance," "dominance," and "calibration" approximately measurable through quantitative proxies.

🔹 Operationalization of the Strength Pillar

The strength pillar encompasses the quality of state institutions, the rule of law, the efficiency of the monopoly on legitimate force, and the safeguarding of freedoms within the framework of ordered governance. Three indicators appear particularly suitable:

Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project):
Measures the state of rule of law along factors such as institutional integrity, judicial independence, and access to justice.
High values indicate a functional balance between freedom and order.

Civil Liberties Score (Freedom House):
Captures the guarantee of fundamental freedoms, particularly political liberties, freedom of expression, and freedom of association.
Addresses whether "strength" functions repressively or as a guarantor.

Military Expenditure (% of GDP) (SIPRI):
Measures the proportion of state resources allocated to military purposes.
Strong dominance of the strength pillar is often reflected in disproportionately high military spending.

- **Operationalization of the Morality Pillar**

The morality pillar describes the extent to which a society permits moral pluralism without descending into fragmentation, and whether normative structures operate inclusively or dogmatically.

Pew Research Government Restrictions on Religion Index:
Captures state-imposed restrictions on religious freedom.
High values indicate moral dominance by the state or religious institutions.

World Values Survey: Tolerance Scores:
Captures public attitudes toward diversity, minorities, and moral pluralism.
A useful indicator for distinguishing between moral openness and dogmatic closure.

Religious Legislation:
Measures the number and type of religiously motivated laws (e.g., blasphemy laws).
Indicates whether moral institutions dominate legislative processes.

- **Operationalization of the Knowledge Pillar**

The knowledge pillar describes innovation capacity, academic freedom, and independence from economic or political interests.

Economic Freedom Index (Heritage Foundation):
Captures market liberalization, protection of property rights, freedom of contract, and competitiveness.
An indicator of free economic knowledge development.

Academic Freedom Index (Varieties of Democracy):
Measures the independence of academic work from state or ideological control.
Captures institutional freedom in research and teaching.

Research Expenditures (% of GDP) (OECD/UNESCO):
Reflects the proportion of economic resources allocated to research and development.
High values indicate active promotion of knowledge production.

- **Operationalization of Meta-Balance**

The meta-balance describes dominance relationships between the pillars. Three key interactions are of particular importance and can be approximately measured using the following proxies:

Lobbying Regulatory Environment (OECD) / Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International):

Measures the extent to which economic elites influence state decision-making processes. High values suggest knowledge → strength dominance.

Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders):
Measures state influence over media-based knowledge dissemination and public debate. High values suggest strength → knowledge/morality dominance.

Religious Policy Indicators (Pew Research):
Captures state measures in favor of or under the influence of religious groups. High values suggest morality → strength/knowledge dominance.

Summary
These indicators enable a comparative assessment of the internal balance within each pillar and the meta-balance of their interactions. The measurement is not deterministically exact but rather approximates balance conditions as trend indicators. On this basis, the subsequent case studies of Singapore and West Germany will systematically illustrate historical approximations to, or deviations from, balanced conditions.

Case Study 1: Singapore

The development of Singapore is regarded as one of the most remarkable examples of economic and institutional ascent in the twentieth century. From an unstable, fragmented colonial port, the city-state transformed after 1965 into a highly developed, efficient, and prosperous nation with one of the world's highest per capita incomes. This case study examines the extent to which this success can be explained, in light of Strüver's thesis, by an approximation toward internal balance within the three pillars of morality, knowledge, and strength, as well as by an improvement in meta-balance.

🔹 Historical Context Before the Ascent

Before independence in 1965, Singapore was characterized by severe imbalances across all three pillars:

- **Strength:** The monopoly on legitimate force formally resided with the British colonial power but was ineffective. The police were weak and unable to contain ethnic riots, high crime rates, or the influence of Chinese triads. Institutions were susceptible to corruption and unrepresentative of the local population.

- **Morality:** Society was highly fragmented. Ethnic and religious groups — Chinese, Malays, Indians — lived largely segregated lives, maintaining separate moral codes.

No integrating moral order existed.

- **Knowledge:** The economy was colonial in nature. The port primarily served British interests, without an autonomous industrial or knowledge-based structure. Education and scientific institutions were accessible only to a small elite.

These imbalances were compounded by a dysfunctional meta-balance: colonial economic interests dominated the weak state (knowledge → strength), while ethnic fragmentation prevented moral cohesion and further undermined state institutions.

🔹 **Transformation After 1965**

With the inauguration of Lee Kuan Yew following Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965, a systematic calibration of all three pillars began:

- **Strength pillar:** Construction of an efficient, clean, and high-performing state. Introduction of a strong but legally regulated monopoly on force. Police and judiciary were professionalized.

- **Morality pillar:** Implementation of a deliberately pluralistic and pragmatic social policy. Formal guarantees of ethnic equality. State programs to promote multicultural cohesion created, for the first time, a shared moral order.

- **Knowledge pillar:** Economic liberalization, promotion of education and science, establishment of research and development centers, and incentives for foreign direct investment.

The meta-balance also improved significantly:

- Although the state maintained relatively tight control over media and public discourse (a slight predominance of strength → knowledge/morality),

- There was neither excessive lobbying (little knowledge → strength dominance) nor significant religious influence on legislation (low morality → strength/knowledge dominance).

🔹 **Outcome**

The consistent movement toward internal balance across all three pillars and the substantial stabilization of meta-balance led to an unprecedented success:

- Singapore's GDP per capita rose from less than USD 1,000 (1965) to over USD 70,000 today.

- Political stability enabled long-term planning.
- Singapore became a globally leading center for innovation, finance, and trade.

In light of Strüver's model, the following can be observed:
Singapore's ascent was not possible despite authoritarian elements, but rather because a functional calibration of the three pillars was achieved, with predominance of the state that did not degenerate into destructive imbalance.

Case Study 2: West Germany

Postwar West Germany is considered one of the most striking examples of successful institutional and economic recovery in modern times. The transformation from a nation devastated by war, morally discredited, and institutionally collapsed into Europe's most stable democracy makes this case particularly suitable for empirically testing Strüver's model.

🔹 **Historical Context Before 1949**

After 1945, Germany lay in political, economic, and moral ruin:

- **Strength pillar:** The collapse of the Nazi state led to the complete disintegration of state institutions. There was no functioning monopoly on force; the country was divided into Allied occupation zones, with daily life marked by insecurity and black-market economies.
- **Morality pillar:** The moral discrediting following twelve years of National Socialism was profound. Society was characterized by mistrust, guilt, and fragmentation. There was no consensual new moral framework.
- **Knowledge pillar:** Science and education had been corrupted by Nazi ideology; leading intellectuals were dead, in exile, or discredited. Research capacities were

decimated, and academic freedom effectively did not exist.

The meta-balance was thoroughly disrupted:

- Extreme authoritarian dominance of the state over morality and knowledge during the Nazi era.
- Complete disintegration and moral disorientation after 1945.

🔹 **Transformation 1949–1970**

With the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and under significant influence from the Western Allies, a systematic recalibration began:

- **Strength pillar:**
  Introduction of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) with separation of powers, a constitutional court, and an efficient administrative apparatus.
  Establishment of a functioning rule of law that upheld individual freedoms.
- **Morality pillar:**
  Establishment of a Western-liberal, pluralistic value system.
  No return to ideological homogeneity; instead, recognition of moral pluralism embedded in a unifying democratic ethos.
- **Knowledge pillar:**
  Construction of a free education system and restoration of academic freedom.
  Development of an open market economy (“social market economy”) with innovation promotion as a guiding principle.

The meta-balance was also successfully stabilized:

- Very low corruption: West Germany soon became one of the least corrupt countries internationally (as reflected in transparency indicators).
- Low religious influence: No state church, clear separation of church and state despite cultural traditions.
- High levels of press and academic freedom: West Germany became a model case for a free public sphere.

🔹 **Outcome**

This consistent movement toward balance, both within the three pillars and at the meta-level, led to unprecedented success:

- The “economic miracle” (*Wirtschaftswunder*): annual growth rates of up to 8%; internationally recognized export-oriented economy.

- Institutional stability: West Germany developed into Europe’s most stable democracy.

- Social cohesion: Despite the Nazi past and the Cold War, new trust in state and society was established.

In light of Strüver’s model, the following is clear:
West Germany’s ascent was not merely the result of capital transfers (e.g., the Marshall Plan) or institutional modernization alone, but rather the expression of a profound calibration of strength, morality, and knowledge — both internally and in their interactions.

Supplementary Case Study: Germany Today – Dysbalance Through Overdominance of the Knowledge Pillar

The application of Strüver’s model allows not only for historical analyses of successful balance conditions but also for diagnosing current dysbalances and potential risk factors for civilizational erosion.
Early 21st-century Germany provides an instructive example: Unlike historical scenarios (e.g., authoritarian dominance of the strength pillar), today’s developments are characterized by a dysbalance primarily resulting from the overdominance of the knowledge pillar, which is actively corrupting and destabilizing the functioning of both morality and strength.

🔹 **Analysis of the Current Dysbalance**

- **Strength pillar:**
  Despite formally stable institutions, political decision-making increasingly shows signs of penetration by private and NGO-related lobbying structures.
  This is empirically measurable: the Lobbying Index (OECD, Transparency International) indicates a significant increase in influence over political institutions.
  The public sector’s share of GDP remains high (>50%), but the allocation of public resources and regulatory frameworks are increasingly driven by private interests rather than the primacy of state neutrality.

- **Morality pillar:**
  Fragmentation and polarization are intensifying: morally charged debates are amplified by the media but are often framed and initiated by NGOs, foundations, and "activist elites" rather than emerging from broad societal consensus.
  Moral pluralism is superficially promoted but, in practice, is increasingly normatively homogenized along economically or ideologically motivated agendas.

- **Knowledge pillar:**
  Knowledge production shows significant signs of dysbalance:

  - Strong influence of privately funded studies commissioned by specific interest groups.

  - Decline in academic independence in politically sensitive areas.

  - Economic Freedom Index and Academic Freedom Index show stagnation or slight decline, while research expenditures are increasingly dominated by private foundations.

🔹 **Meta-Balance: Dominant Pattern**

The current meta-balance reveals a historically new pattern:

- **Knowledge → Strength:**
  Economic actors, lobbying groups, and activist NGOs are directly shaping political processes.
  Institutional decisions appear increasingly driven by the interests of individual players rather than oriented toward the common good.

- **Knowledge → Morality:**
  Knowledge-based institutions (e.g., research consortia, "expert panels") predefine normative agendas and establish moral standards that lack broad democratic legitimacy.

Strength and morality are not themselves excessively dominant; rather, they are weakened and instrumentalized.

🔹 **Outcome and Interpretation**

Germany today thus exhibits a qualitatively new form of dysbalance:
Not authoritarian strength, nor dogmatic morality dominates, but the knowledge pillar (in the broadest sense: privately financed "expertocracy," lobbying, and NGO penetration), which, through its influence over state and moral discourses, generates systemic dysfunction.

This is empirically evidenced by:

- The rising Lobbying Index,
- The increasing influence of privately commissioned studies serving client interests,
- The declining independence of public institutions and discourse.

In light of Strüver's model, the following diagnosis applies:
Germany is progressively moving away from a balanced condition because the knowledge pillar, lacking sufficient stabilization by morality and strength, is growing disproportionately and expanding its dominance. This explains a gradual erosion of public debate culture, declining trust in institutions, and reduced autonomy of state decision-making.

Example: Operationalizing the Strength Pillar in Germany (2000–2023)

To illustrate how the 70/30 calibration rule can be approximated with empirical data, the **Rule of Law Index** from the World Governance Indicators (WGI) was applied to Germany between 2000 and 2023. The index is originally measured on a scale of –2.5 to +2.5; for purposes of comparability, values were normalized to a 0–100 scale, where higher values indicate greater institutional freedom and weaker emphasis on order.

Year	WGI (–2.5–+2.5)	Normalized (0–100)
2000	1.6	82
2005	1.7	84
2010	1.6	82
2015	1.8	86
2020	1.5	80
2023	1.6	82

Throughout the observed period, Germany consistently scores between **80 and 88**, which corresponds to a situation of **very high freedom orientation and relatively weak constraint orientation**. In Strüver Model terms, this represents a strong tilt toward the **"70" side** of the heuristic, with the **"30" side of stabilizing order increasingly underrepresented**.

This diagnosis is consistent with qualitative observations: although formal rule of law and civil liberties remain strong, enforcement capacity, infrastructural upkeep, and institutional authority show signs of erosion. High-profile examples include lenient sentencing in violent

crime cases, declining public trust in the justice system, and underinvestment in critical infrastructure. These phenomena point to an **imbalance within the strength pillar itself**: freedom without sufficient stabilizing order.

In Strüver's calibration logic, this constitutes a **dysbalance toward permissiveness**, which destabilizes the meta-balance by weakening the state's capacity to function as guarantor of both moral pluralism and knowledge freedom.

Lobbying and Meta-Balance in Contemporary Germany

A further indicator of dysbalance in present-day Germany can be derived from the **OECD's regulatory framework on lobbying and influence**. For more than a decade, the OECD has emphasized the risks of unregulated lobbying to institutional integrity, yet Germany only introduced a **mandatory Lobby Register in 2022**, requiring disclosure of actors engaging with Bundestag and federal ministries. While this marked a formal step toward transparency, the system remains limited: financial data, specific lobbying expenditures, and comprehensive coverage of all influencing actors are still absent.

In **2024**, the OECD further adopted an updated *Recommendation on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying and Influence*, calling for more detailed disclosures, including so-called *lobby footprints* and improved reporting on foreign influence. Germany has not yet implemented these enhanced standards. Thus, while international organizations acknowledge the growing importance of lobbying regulation, the domestic regulatory practice lags behind the global benchmark.

From the perspective of the **Strüver Model**, this represents a critical **meta-balance issue**. Whereas the strength pillar (rule of law, institutional order) and the morality pillar (pluralism, cohesion) remain largely tied to national parameters, the **knowledge pillar increasingly operates in globalized networks** of corporations, NGOs, and think tanks. The absence of robust transparency requirements allows knowledge-actors to disproportionately shape political outcomes—evidence of the knowledge pillar encroaching on the strength pillar.

The imbalance is therefore not merely a question of national institutions underperforming, but of **internationally amplified influence** undermining domestic calibration. While Germany scores highly on freedom indices, the growing gap between **formal transparency norms (OECD, EU)** and **actual regulatory practice** illustrates a tilt in the meta-balance toward knowledge dominance. In Strüver's calibration logic, this is a textbook example of how globalization can exacerbate internal weakness: framing conditions (global knowledge flows) are not inherently destabilizing, but without adequate balancing mechanisms, they distort the equilibrium of the three pillars.

As an explicit time-series proxy for growing influence of knowledge actors, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows Germany declined from about 77 in 2012 to 75 in 2024. In a high-governance democracy, this subtle yet notable decline suggests increasing perceived influence by non-state actors—indicating an overdominance of the knowledge pillar, while the capacity of the strength pillar to calibrate proportionally is relatively weakening.

Table: Germany's CPI Scores as Proxy for Lobbying Influence (2012–2024)

Year	CPI Score (0 = highly corrupt, 100 = very clean)	Notes
2012	77	Germany ranked among the top 15 globally
2016	81	Peak value within the last decade
2020	80	Stable but slightly declining
2023	78	Ongoing downward trend
2024	75	Lowest value in over a decade

Conclusion:
This example illustrates particularly well the diagnostic power of Strüver's model:
It not only accounts for classical authoritarian dysbalances but also captures and interprets more subtle, contemporary patterns, such as the overdominance of an ostensibly "neutral" knowledge pillar, in empirically measurable terms.

Alternative Explanations: Exogenous Factors as Framing Conditions

Several established explanations for the ascent of West Germany and Singapore emphasize external or exogenous factors. Among them are (a) security umbrellas provided by the United States and Britain, (b) favorable geostrategic locations with access to trade routes, (c) capital inflows such as the Marshall Plan or foreign direct investment, and (d) cultural predispositions such as Protestant ethics or Confucian values. While these accounts are not incorrect, they remain incomplete when taken in isolation.

Security guarantees, for example, are best understood as framing conditions rather than causal drivers. Had West Germany not benefited from U.S. protection, it would likely have fallen under Soviet influence, which in turn would have created a different set of constraints and opportunities. The decisive factor lies not in the mere existence of a security umbrella but in how a society recalibrates its internal balance under these given conditions. The same logic applies to Singapore: its strategic position on global shipping routes historically enabled piracy as much as commerce. Only through deliberate institutional and moral calibration did the city-state transform this volatile status quo into an advantage for balanced development.

The same reasoning undermines purely capital-centric explanations. Financial injections, such as the Marshall Plan or modern subsidy regimes, do not automatically lead to flourishing. Without internal calibration, external funding can result in dependency,

inefficiency, or even “zombie economies.” Similarly, cultural traditions—whether Protestant discipline or Confucian collectivism—provide no deterministic path to success. They are mutable frameworks that can either stabilize or destabilize depending on their calibration with the other pillars, particularly morality.

Taken together, these exogenous explanations demonstrate that every society operates within a set of constraints and initial conditions. However, these conditions alone cannot account for long-term flourishing. Only when external inputs are processed through a balanced calibration of the three pillars—strength, morality, and knowledge—do they generate sustainable outcomes. This integrative logic is precisely what the Strüver Model provides: it avoids incoherence by neither privileging isolated factors nor denying their influence, but instead situating them within a coherent framework of internal and meta-balance.

Discussion: Strengths and Limitations of the Model

The analysis of the two case studies has demonstrated that Strüver’s model offers substantial advantages over existing approaches. Its principal strength lies in its holistic perspective: unlike sectorally specialized theories (e.g., the Solow model, institutional economics, social capital theories), Strüver’s model integrates moral, institutional, and knowledge-based dimensions into a coherent analytical framework. It does not merely examine the condition of individual institutions or markets, but instead views the interdependencies between three fundamental pillars as the condition for civilizational success.

A second advantage is its proxy-based applicability: using internationally comparable indicators (Rule of Law Index, Freedom House Scores, Economic Freedom Index, Academic Freedom Index, Government Restrictions on Religion Index, etc.), balance conditions in the three pillars and their interactions can be approximated. This provides methodological compatibility with existing datasets and a practical basis for comparative empirical studies.

The explanatory power of the model is considerable: it offers a plausible explanation for why Singapore and West Germany, in very different contexts, achieved economic and societal success following periods of dysfunction — not through isolated factors such as capital

transfer or property rights protection alone, but through the combination of internally calibrated pillars and a stable meta-balance.

Despite these strengths, Strüver's model is not without limitations:

- First, the "70/30 rule" cannot be defined as an absolute numerical threshold but remains heuristic: there is no precisely determinable value at which balance is objectively given.

- Second, the indicators used are context-dependent: what is considered acceptable (e.g., military spending, religious legislation) varies across cultures and historical periods.

- Third, qualitative interpretive analysis remains necessary: indicators alone do not capture the depth of historical or cultural dynamics.

In comparison to established models such as the Solow model or Acemoglu and Robinson's institutional economics, Strüver's model stands out for its broader coverage and system integration, while deliberately foregoing the strict quantifiability that characterizes classical economic models. It is therefore best understood as a "midrange model": empirically applicable but qualitatively interpretive at its core.

Importantly, the model's structure suggests an additional strength: its **diagnostic and prognostic capability**. By identifying early signs of imbalance — measurable through proxy indicators — the model allows for the detection of emerging dysfunctions before they escalate into crises. If desired, this could provide nations and civilizational systems with concrete policy guidance for recalibration, helping decision-makers to take evidence-based action to restore or maintain societal balance.

Conclusion and Outlook

This analysis demonstrates that the Strüver model, as the first integrative approach to analyzing civilizational development, fills a significant gap in existing explanatory frameworks. While established models focus on isolated determinants such as capital, institutions, or trust, Strüver's approach integrates the three pillars of morality, knowledge, and strength, placing special emphasis on their internal balance and meta-balance as key drivers of societal development.

The model relies on empirically operationalizable proxy indicators without attempting to reduce the complexity of social systems to rigid numerical formulas. This deliberate methodology enables the reconstruction and diagnosis of balance and dysbalance and provides a plausible explanatory framework for historical success stories such as Singapore and West Germany, which otherwise would only be partially explicable.

The outlook for methodological advancement of this approach is promising: with a clearly defined catalog of indicators and interpretive thresholds, the model could serve as a **diagnostic tool for policy studies**, helping policymakers to identify structural imbalances and set political priorities on an evidence-based foundation.

Moreover, extending its application to larger comparative studies would be valuable: applying the model to additional historical and contemporary societies (e.g., Japan after 1945, South Korea after 1960, China since the 1980s) could help clarify its universal versus culturally specific character.

Overall, Strüver's approach offers a novel, robust framework that opens the door to a more holistic, systemically oriented analysis of civilizational dynamics — empirically applicable, philosophically grounded, and, crucially, capable of **anticipating emerging societal dysfunctions and informing targeted recalibration strategies where desired**.

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