

**SOS POLITICAL AND PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION  
M.A. POL.SC.204  
SUBJECT NAME:COMPARATIVE POLITICS  
UNIT-II  
TOPIC NAME:POLITICAL CULTURE  
APPROACH**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Political culture refers to those ideas, values, attitudes or orientation about a political system which is acceptable to and shared by the majority of the people in the state. The term political culture will be more assertive when it will be explained in the realm of politics. So it means that within group and society there is diverse strands of opinions about a political system, norm and beliefs.

According to Sydney Verb: "Political culture is the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place "One difficulty of defining political culture is that it is result of two opposite and sometimes contradictory trends, namely the political beliefs and attitudes of the individual and the political values and attitudes of the people and society in which he/she lives. Political culture approach helps in dealing with the totality of the political system atone and political culture of a society is the most significant aspect of a political system.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE:-**

Just as the structures of the political system develop, so does its culture. The development of political culture is commonly known as "Secularization" secularization is the process whereby men become increasingly rational, analytical and empirical in their political action. It distinguishes a traditional political system from modern political system. Anyhow the political culture of a system develops in two ways, by differentiation of roles and by secularization or rationalization of behavior. Individual's attitudes and values are the result of political socialization. Political orientation of the individual can be due to 3 factors: 1- Individual perception, 2- his/her feelings, 3- conclusions or opinions. These perceptions, attitudes and opinions produce effects on the political system. This is called his/her political efficacy. It means that citizens can influence positively or negatively the decisions and policies of the rulers by his efforts such as by his/her vote.

# **COMPONENTS OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE:**

Every political culture consists of various elements, which are the orientations of the people towards different aspects of the political system.

- 1-Cognitive orientation:- It refers to the knowledge and beliefs about the political system.
- 2-Affective orientation:- It refers to the feelings about the political system.
- 3-Evaluative orientation:- It refers to judgment and opinions about political systems by the people

## **TYPES OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE:-**

Political culture can be classified according to whether members of society take an active role in the political process and expects benefits from governmental activity or whether there is a passive relationship in which individuals know very little about governmental activity and do not expect to share in the decision-making process.

1)Parochial political culture: People who exhibit or no awareness of the political systems fall in this category. Individual is not aware of nor has opinions about the system as a whole but only of the local community.

2)Subject political culture:-People who have relatively higher-level of orientation towards a differential political system and toward the output aspects of the system than possessed by the people but their orientation towards input objects and active participation are still on somewhat low level. People are not oriented to take part in output structures as they do not have clear knowledge of the process by which they can influence the political system. Subject orientation is that when individual is aware of the system but is essentially passive and accepts decisions.

3) Participant political culture:-Members of state obtain fairly higher-level of orientation to the system as a whole i.e. to both political and administrative structures and processes. Members of the society fully aware to the input and output functions of the system. They are oriented towards an activist role of self in the polity and are able to articulate their interests. They are always engaged in interest articulation and put demands on the political system

4) Authoritarian political culture:-In this participation in political affairs and decisions in political affairs and decisions is according to the authority of the state or government. The ruler is the real decision maker, the people as a voters are to comply with his decisions.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

Political culture involves three primary characteristics: Values, beliefs, attitudes

Values: Beliefs, norms and ideals that impose a set of externally perceived constraints on thinking, feeling and behaving

Beliefs: Deeply rooted patterns of thoughts

Attitudes: Settled mode of thinking. The opinions and feelings as well as predispositions toward particular patterns of behavior

# THEORIES

In 1963, two political scientists, Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, published a study of the political cultures associated with five democratic countries: Germany, Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States. According to Almond and Verba, there are three basic types of political culture, which can be used to explain why people do or do not participate in political processes.

In a parochial political culture, like Mexico, citizens are mostly uninformed and unaware of their government and take little interest in the political process. In a subject political culture, such as those found in Germany and Italy, citizens are somewhat informed and aware of their government and occasionally participate in the political process. In a participant political culture, like the United Kingdom and the United States, citizens are informed and actively participate in the political process.

Other theories of political culture address how political culture takes root and is transferred from generation to generation through political socialization and include Seymour Martin Lip set's formative events theory, which describes the long-lasting effects of key events that took place when a country was founded; Louis Hart's fragment theory, which explains the long-lasting effects of European colonization on countries and societies; and Roger Inglehart's post-materialism theory, which explains the long-lasting effects of childhood economic and social conditions.

# ASPECTS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

## 1. System Culture

- Political legitimacy
- Political community
- Regimes & authorities

## 2. Process culture

- Orientations
- Views of one's influence in the political process
- View's of one's influence in other political actors

### 3. Policy Culture

- Image of a good society
- Evaluation
- Agreement
- Change in perceptions

## **DEVELOPMENT & POLITICAL CULTURE**

- Inkless-Smith findings: Wherever modern institutions and influences such as industry, education, and themes media have spread, they have tended to create modern, secular attitudes.
- Four differences between community(underdeveloped) and society (developed):
- Modern culture views objects in specific, rather than in diffuse, terms
- It views them in a neutral, rather than emotional, fashion
- It is attuned to universal standards and concepts, rather than particularistic ones
- It emphasizes achievement, rather than inherited status, in evaluating worth and in recruiting individuals to social roles

# MODERNIZATION & SECULARIZATION

- How does secularization or modernization affect the principal features of political culture? Two levels:
- At the process level, secularization means a greater awareness of political opportunities and a willingness to utilize them. Secularization means an increase in political participation because it accompanies new views of legitimacy. At a minimum, secularization has meant decline in parochial attitudes toward political process and an increase in subject and participant roles.
- At the system level, secularization means the weakening of standards of legitimacy based on custom or charisma and the increasing importance of government performance as a basis of legitimacy. Belief in the divine may continue, but rulers in a secularized culture will have to act on the maxim that God helps those who help themselves.
- In a general sense, there has been a historical association between the extent of secularization and increased political performance

# BOUNDARIES OF POLITICAL CULTURE

- Nature (Individual): Political culture is a social product in the sense that it is shared among individuals in their plurality.
- Content (Dimension): Not all the political attitudes and sentiments of a people are necessarily relevant in defining their political culture for many are too ephemeral and lightly held to affect fundamental development. To be regarded as political culture, attitudes must be politically relevant, widely shared, or frequently occurring.
- Function (System): To Beer, political culture is at once the source of the meanings with which men invest their behavior and the instrument by which those sharing a common political culture perceive and understand those meanings. Pye argues that for the individual the political culture provides controlling guidelines for effective political behavior.

# CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONCEPT:

- As a basis of understanding
- Verb: The study of political culture should further our understanding of politics. Rosenbaum: An awareness of political culture enhances our understanding of political events.
- Descriptive utility
- Helps to determine empirically what beliefs, values and attitudes are in fact acting as regulatory mechanism within a political system
- Explanatory/Predicative utility:
- Verb: Political culture is a useful explanatory tool for an understanding of the operation (the development and adaptability) of a political system.

# **POLITICAL CULTURE AS AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**

- Culture should be treated as an implicit logic internalized in people's mind as common knowledge. Also, although culture is
- perceived mostly as a dependent variable, political culture could be used as an independent variable.
- Ignoring cultural factors cannot help to fill the theoretical gap left by rational choice theory or other approaches.
- Three reasons why political scientists avoid using culture as an independent variable in their studies:
  - Methodological obstacles
  - The rise of rational choice theory
  - Dependency theory incited political scientists to set up a moral boundary that restricts the use of cultural explanations to account for underdevelopment

## CULTURE AS UNSTABLE OR VARIABLE: TWO APPROACHES

- Culture as dependent variable - effect (Seligson and Booth): Political culture is volatile and highly contingent on the variation of domestic and international conditions. It always changes in response to institutions and incentive structures. Hence there is little value in using political culture as an independent variable to explain political phenomena, instead it is legitimate to use structural and institutional variables (as determinant).
- Culture as independent variable - cause (Inglehart, Almond & Verba): Cultural
- changes originate from changes in people's basic values. While attitudes may
- change very rapidly in a short period of time due to fluctuations of many short-term conditions, basic values are relatively stable and can be measured through careful analysis of public opinion data. Hence culture is stable and durable.
- Culture as an independent variable has autonomous power in driving the formation and evolution of political institutions

- Swindler: These two arguments are not necessarily exclusionary, rather they represent how people perceive, use, and change culture when facing different environmental conditions.
- A dual purpose: In ordinary times culture serves as an anchor for people's basic values, with which people's actions are (half) consciously directed. In unsettled
- times, culture comes as a tool kit to provide people with resources to restructure their cultures in response to external changes.

## **DISCUSSION**

If political culture is a byproduct of patterned individual interactions (culture), do you think it is really possible to explain political behavior/attitude/orientation in light of culture objectively w/out bias, prejudice or stereotyping(b/of the human element)?. Is culture the main determinant of a political attitude? What about historical development and geo politics? .If the definition of culture is based on the Western epistemology derived from Western experience, how is it possible to have a value-added description of a universal political culture?. Is the very term of culture a Western creation designed to compartmentalize the outside world and create an "other" to define oneself against?