

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS ON POLITICAL CULTURE

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Abstract

Political culture is composed of the attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values of society that relate to the political system and to political issues. These attitudes may not be consciously held, but be implicit in an individual or group relationship with the political system. However this concept is very popular among scholars and it is interact with many other concepts in Political Science. So the main objective of this article is to analyse the conceptual framework of political culture. The study is based on secondary data which obtained by articles, books, websites and other resources. Also the study based on content analysis method. Finally the study reveals that the concept of political culture has developed gradually and it is a wide concept.

Keywords:

Political culture;
concepts;
attitudes;
scholars;
Political Science.

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1.0 Breif Introduction on Political Culture

Culture refers to everything socially created. As a concept political culture date back in 1950s. Also it has become more strongly in 1960s. Simply political culture means a set of attitudes and practices held by people which shape the behavior of them in a certain political system. It includes moral judgments, political myths, beliefs, and ideas about what makes for a good society. Political culture is important because it shapes the attitude and actions of people in a country. However this concept defined by many scholars in various ways.

According to Pye (1995), Political culture means, “the sum of the fundamental values, sentiments and knowledge that give form and substance to political processes”(2012books.lardbucket.org).

Also W. Lance, noted in his book, “Public opinion in American politics” that the components of political culture can be difficult to define as below mentioned.

“They are rather like the lenses in a pair of glasses: they are not the things we see when we look at the world; they are the things we see with” (2012books.lardbucket.org).

María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni defines political culture as "the set of discourses and symbolic practices by means of which both individuals and groups articulate their relationship to power, elaborate their political demands and put them at stake."

Also Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba defined in his books which published in 1963, that the political culture means, the pattern of orientation to political objects among the members of the nation. They expliend what does it mean political objectives. Those are parliament, political parties and folklore about the history of a certain country.

2.0 Conceptual Analysis on Political Culture

2.1 Classifications of Political Cultute

However the term “Political culture” brought to the Political Science to develop American political system. This concept at the very first used by Gabriel Almond in late 1950s’. After that under the consideration of this concept Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba outlined a book in

1963 as “The civic culture”. This study is very popular among the world and it based on a survey which conducted during the period of 1959- 1960 in USA, Britain, West Germany, Italy and Mexico. The purpose of this study is to identify the political culture that the liberal democracy was most likely to survive and develop (Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin, P. 60). They have proposed three basic models of political culture according to the above survey as below mentioned.

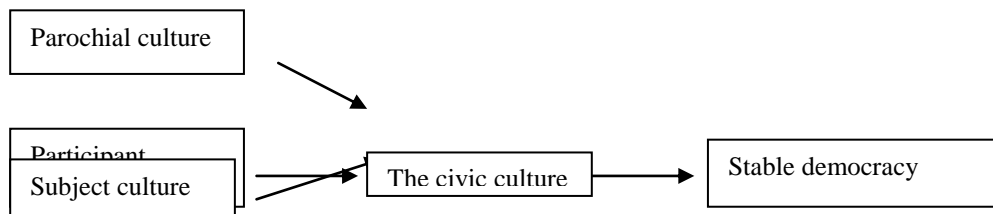
1. Parochial culture
2. Subject culture
3. Participant culture

In “Parochial political culture” people have no understanding of the national political system, and they do not effort to participate input political processes and have no consciousness of the output processes. However, in these kind of political culture citizens’ have no cognitive orientation towards the political system. Also the citizens do not expect anything from the political system, because it seen as the elite domain. African tribes and Eskimos fall in this category. Such citizens have no role to play in the political culture (www.politicalsciencenotes.com). In subject political Culture, citizens are aware of the political system which going on their country, but people are not taught to participate in the input functions. In these kind of political system people have enough knowledge of the law making procedure of government, enforcement and tax collection (www.politicalsciencenotes.com). In this kind of a political culture as above the citizens see that the political system is elite domain and only to be engages in by those with power and influenced. Almond and Verba given Italy and Germany as for the examples for these kind of a political culture. In the more familier participate political culture, citizens belive both that they can contribute to the system and that they are affected by it. Also in this kind of a political couture people develop a particular attitude towards the political system. Political parties and pressure groups fall in this category and decide for themselves what role they can play.

Those three types of political cultures are said as ideal types; none of them can be found in it pure form in any society, since the all individuals within a political system cannot be expected to be oriented in the same way and to the same extent. Finally, Almond and Verbas’ core idea was that democracy will prove most stable in societies where subject and parachial attitude provide

ballast to an essentially participant culture. This mix is termed the “civic culture”. Below figure 1.0 clearly express how civic culture designed under the above combination. However according to the above combination, citizens’ are sufficiently active in politics to express their preferences to rulers but are not so involved as to refuse to accept decisions with which they disagree. In Almond and Verba, study Britain and to a lesser extent the United States, came closer to this ideal. In both countries citizens’ felt they could influence the government but often chose not to do so, thus giving the government a measure of flexibility.

Figure 01: Almond and Verba’s theory of the civic culture



(Source: Almond & Verba, 1963)

However, it was only negatively criticized by two European political scientists namely Gerhard Lehmbruch and Arend Lijphart. So their arguments based on the research which was conducted by Lehmbruch in Switzerland and Austria and by Lijphart in Netherlands. So both of them argued that there are political systems that are more stable than the one in the United States of America (<http://sahano9.blogspot.com>). Lijphart argued that there are several classifications of political culture. Those are as:

Classification number 01.

- Mass political culture
- Elite political culture

Classification number 02 (of political culture of the elites):

- Coalitional
- Contradictive

Lijphart also classified the structure of society as:

- Homogeneous
- Heterogeneous

Below chart deeply describe the Lijpharts structure of society.

Structure of society (Right)		
Political culture of elites (Down)	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Coalitional	Depoliticalised democracy	Consociative democracy
Contradictive	Centripetal democracy	Centrifugal democracy

(<http://sahano9.blogspot.com>).

The most stable political system is consociative democracy, which consist with all the parts of the society as well as work together and not contradict each other. These kind of political systems are commonly seen in the Scandinavian countries. Specially in Sweden (<http://sahano9.blogspot.com>). However political culture is a property of a collectivity. Such examples are, a country, region, class, or party. Most of the studies on political culture considered on national culture, some studies focused on territorially defined units at the subnational level, such as the political cultures of American states, Canadian provinces, or Italian regions. Other studies analyzed the cultural attributes of social groups such as the political elite, the working class, and the like.

1.2 Aspects of political culture

Political culture consists of variety of elements. Some of those are,

- Political beliefs
- Traditions
- Symbols
- Folklore
- Rituals
- Heroes.

These elements directly influence for the feeling of the citizens to maintain the bond between the citizens and their country. When considering on beliefs, it means the ideas which reputed and identify as true by a certain society. But these beliefs can be change by society to society. As an example democracy and liberty are respective beliefs of citizens in America. Also the people of America respect the principle of equality. This core American belief is found in the preamble to

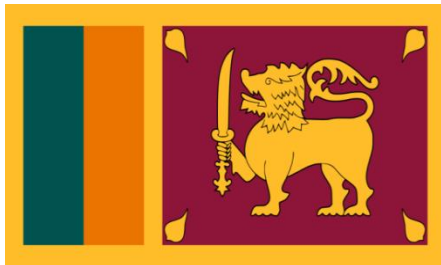
the Declaration of Independence, which states that “all men are created to be equal” (<http://open.lib.umn.edu>). According to the survey, between 80%-90% of citizens in America believe that all the citizens treat to be equally regardless of race or ethnic background. Also the citizens of United Kingdom believe that the royal family of United Kingdom as for a pride for their country. However actually the queens’ majesty does have important ceremonial and formal roles in relation to the government of the United Kingdom (<http://open.lib.umn.edu>). When consider on Spanish, Spanish basques feel that loyalty to their group is more important than loyalty to Spain as a whole, and because of the strength of these attitudes there is a strong separatist movement in the Basque provinces. The growth of the Scottish National Party, especially in terms of electoral support, has illustrated the strength of separatist feelings within the United Kingdom(Ball, Alan. R, P 58).

Another element is political rituals/ traditions. Political traditions are the customs and festivities which by generation to generation. As an example celebrating Americas’ founding on the fourth of July with parades, picnics, and fireworks. Also in United States end of the election as a ritual vanquished candidate congratulating the opponent for the support that given for a well-fought battle and unity behind the victor (<http://open.lib.umn.edu>). Also in Pakistan the citizens of Pakistan celebrate their national day on 23rd of March as a tradition. Actually that is the day that the Pakistan adopted their first constitution in 1956. But, presently the government of Pakistan practice the constitution which adopted in 1973. When considering on Sri Lanka the politics interact with Buddhism and when there is a political issue in Sri Lankan society politicians used to visit Buddhist nuns and getting advices. Also when consider the political culture in United Kingdom, as an tradition the citizens of United Kingdom highly celebrate, birth of a member of their royal family. The recent example is citizens of United Kingdom celebrated birth of Prince Louis on 23rd of April, 2018. However special thing is royal family is just a ceremonial element of their political system.

Symbols are another element in political culture which stand for a nation. Most significant symbol is national flag that using in a national ceremonial day. However these symbols express the idealized of the political institutions and not necessarily related to the level of political knowledge and competence of the people whose emotions are channeled through such symbols(

Ball, Alan. R, P 65). When considering on united state, it has officially adopted bald eagle, in 1787 to show the supreme power and authority of America. Also Statue of Liberty stand in New York Harbor, in 1844 is a gift from France and that is a symbol which welcoming people from foreign lands to America. When consider this element with Sri Lanaka, Sinhala means “lions’ blood” and because of that it central to the national flag of Sri Lanaka. However in Sri Lankan flag the lion and the maroon background represent the Sinhalese, while the saffron border and four Bo leaves represent Buddhism and the four Buddhist concepts of *Metta*, *Karuna*, *Mudita* and *Upeska* respectively. The stripes represent the two main minorities: the orange representing the Sri Lankan Tamils and the green representing Muslims (<https://www.everyculture.com>). The uniforms and the flags of the Nazi mass rallies presented an image of strength, unity and authority. In Russia Lenins’ memory was used as a symbol of the continuity and ideological purity of the Soviet leadership.

Figure 02: National flag of Sri Lanka



(Source: www.google.com)

Political folklore, the legends and stories that are shared by a nation, constitutes another element of culture. Individualism and egalitarianism are central themes in American folklore that are used to reinforce the country's values. The “rags-to-riches” narratives of novelists—the late-nineteenth-century writer Horatio Alger being the quintessential example—celebrate the possibilities of advancement through hard work.

Most of folklore built up between the period of American revolution. The first president of United States, “George Washington” is more popular character in American political folklore. Specially among the school children. The lessons that the young children gain from the character of George Washington is, impeccable honesty and the importance of telling the truth.

Folklore build up an image of the strength of women and men who were during the past days. However, Most of the folklore contains with true information, but these are usually with overemphasize. When consider on Sri Lanka there are several important and populay political folkore which about struggle between Sri Lankan leaders and Great Britain to gain the independence.

Heroes embody the human characteristics most prized by a country. A nations' political culture is in part defined by its heroes who, in theory, embody the best of what that country has to offer. Simply heroes mean people who admire by a society baccuse of their charctor, courage, leadership and beneficence. People can achive these kind of a status baccuse of other factors, such as athletic excellence, educational excellence and other wealth. "*Weera puran appu*" "*Gongalegoda Banda*" are some of the examples in Sri Lanka who sacrificed their lives to gain the independence to Sri Lanka from Great Britain. There are some patriotic leaders in America such as American-flag designer Betsy Ross; prominent presidents, such as Abraham Lincoln; and military leaders, such as Civil War General Stonewall Jackson, a leader of the Confederate army. Also "*Mahathma Gandhi*" in India, "*Nelson Mandela*" in South Africa are also well reputed not only by their own country, but also from all over the world.

However, political culture is defined by the ideologies, values, beliefs, norms, customs, traditions and heroes characteristic of a nation. People living in a certain political culture which interact with their own ideologies, values, beliefs, customs and heroes. These aspects it means these elements strickly enfluence to shape the political culture of a certain country. But the influence of these elements can be different by country to country.

2.0 Conclusion

Political culture is a wide concept which interact with various ideologies, values, beliefs, customs, traditions and characteristics. When consider the conceptual framework it clerly express that it is a deep concept. Also above conceptual analysis clearly revels that the nature of political culture different by country to country as well as society to society. The influence of the elements which shape the political culture of a nation can be change by country to country. Also political culture should be studied not just as an abstract category but also as a phenomenon

which evolves in the actual practice of politics. Also political culture is influential for the stability of a government.

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