



Reasonability of Political Culture in Politics

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I. INTRODUCTION

Political culture can be thought of as a nation's political personality. It encompasses the deep-rooted, well-established political traits that are characteristics of a society. It takes into consideration the attitudes, values and beliefs that people in a society have about the political system, including standard assumptions about the way that government works. The term political culture was first used by Gabriel Almond in "Comparative Political System" which appeared in the Journal of Political System Vol. 18, 1956. Several others like Samuel Beer, Adam Ulams, Sidney Verba, Lucian Pye, Dennis Kavangh, etc., have been responsible for popularising it. Its early use was also made in "Patterns of Government" (Random House, New York, 1958) edited by Samuel Beer and Adem Ulham. Gradually, this term became popular and now it has come to stand as a very important touchstone for a morphological study of the political system. In the words of Almond and Powell "Political culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics among the members of a political system". Lucian Pye writes that "political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments of that give orders and meaning to a political process and that provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. Maria Eugenia Vazquez Semaderi defined it as the set of discourses and symbolic practices by means of which both individuals and groups articulate the relationship to power, elaborate their political demands and put them at stake. Political culture refers to what people believe and feel about government, and how they think people should act towards it. The understanding of "Political culture" is a powerful, integrating concept of political science, attitudes and beliefs that effect around the nature of political system and the way it works. It is a distinctive and patterned way of thinking about how political and economic life ought to be carried out. Lowell Dittmer defines political culture as a system of political symbols and this system nests within a more inclusive system that might term political communication. It is the way in which the political community perceive it to function and the level of acceptance that pervades as a result. It sets the boundaries of acceptable political behavior in a society. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation in aggregate form of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. It is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experiences.

To understand the relationship of a government to its people, and how those people are going to act toward that government and others, it is necessary to study what those people believe about themselves and government. Daniel Elazar, from whom much of the information below has been taken, has defined it as: "the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is imbedded." A more simple definition is: "Attitudes, values, beliefs, and orientations that individuals in a society hold regarding their political system." The term 'political culture' is used in the field of social science. It refers to historically-based, widely-shared beliefs, feelings, and values about the nature of political systems, which can serve as a link between citizens and government. It includes moral judgments, political myths, beliefs, and ideas about what makes for a good society. A political culture is a reflection of a government, but it also incorporates elements of history and tradition that may predate the current regime. Political cultures matter because they shape a population's political perceptions and actions. Governments can help shape political culture and public opinion through education, public events, and commemoration of the past. Political cultures vary greatly from state to state and sometimes even within a state. Generally speaking, however, political culture remains more or less the same over time. 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.

Different countries have different political cultures, which can help us understand how and why their governments are organized in a certain way, why democracies succeed or fail, or why some countries still have monarchies. Understanding our own political culture can also provide clues to political relationships, such as those we share with each other or our governments. In the United States, we may be tempted to think of political culture in terms of voting status as a Democrat or Republican. However, it's important to understand that political culture differs from political ideology. The term 'political ideology' refers to a code of beliefs or views about governments and politics that may influence the way we vote or whether or not we support certain legislative actions. For example, two people can share a political culture, but have different political ideologies. In other words, a right-wing conservative can be from the same political culture as a left-wing liberal. In other words, political culture is something we share, while a political ideology is something we use to define ourselves and make political decisions. Every country has a political culture — widely shared beliefs, values, and norms that define the relationship between citizens and government, and citizens to one another. Beliefs about economic life are part of the political culture because politics affects economics. A good understanding of a country's political culture can help make sense of the way a country's government is designed, as well as the political decisions its leaders make. For example, why does Great Britain still have a queen? She doesn't have any real political



power, so why don't they just end the monarchy? These questions can be puzzling, unless we understand something about the British political culture — one that highly prizes tradition.

Even within the United States, political culture varies from place to place. They have a belief that they consider themselves bound by common values and common hopes. For much of the twentieth century, southern politicians were reputed to be slow-acting and polite, whereas northern politicians were seen as efficient but abrupt and sometimes rude. This belief led President John F. Kennedy to once lament that Washington, D.C., had the charm of a northern city and the efficiency of a southern one. The American political culture that Tocqueville described in the 1830s has changed over the years, but in many ways, it has remained remarkably the same, even after the continent was settled coast to coast. The American view has been characterized by several familiar elements: American political culture puts a special emphasis on hard work, and is rife with stories of successful businessmen and leaders. Consider Abraham Lincoln, who achieved great stature despite having been born in a log cabin.

- **Liberty:** Most people believe in the right to be free, as long as another's rights aren't abused.
- **Equality:** This generally translates as "equality of opportunity," not absolute equality.
- **Democracy:** Elected officials are accountable to the people. Citizens have the responsibility to choose their officials thoughtfully and wisely.
- **Individualism:** The individual's rights are valued above those of the state (government); individual initiative and responsibility are strongly encouraged.
- **The Rule of Law:** Government is based on a body of law applied equally and fairly, not on the whims of a ruler.
- **Nationalism:** Despite some current negative attitudes toward the government, most Americans are proud of our past and tend to de-emphasize problems, such as intolerance or military setbacks. This value includes the belief that we are stronger and more virtuous than other nations.
- **Capitalism:** At the heart of the American Dream are beliefs in the rights to own private property and compete freely in **OPEN MARKETS** with as little government involvement as possible.

Other countries may share some, or even all, of these beliefs and values. However, the arrangement and subtleties of this core form an array that makes every political culture a little different than all the others. The elements of the American political culture include disagreement and debate. They include ideals, but they leave room for the reality of falling short of goals.

II. ESSENTIAL PARADIGM TO POLITICAL CULTURE

1. *Citizenship:*

Political culture is connected to notions of citizenship because political culture frequently includes an idea of what makes people good citizens. A citizen is a legal member of a political community, with certain rights and obligations. Because each country has its own requirements for citizenship and attendant rights, the definition of "citizen" varies around the world. The Greek philosopher Aristotle was probably the first person to puzzle over what makes someone a citizen in his treatise *Politics*. He reasoned that living in a particular place does not automatically make a person a citizen because, in his day (as in ours) resident aliens and immigrants often lived in a country without becoming citizens. In the end, Aristotle defined a citizen as one who shares in the offices and power of a regime (even if only in a small way). So, a tyranny has one citizen, whereas a democracy has many citizens. Not surprisingly, different countries have different criteria for citizenship. France automatically bestows citizenship on anyone born in French territory via *jus soli* (Latin for "right by territory"). Germany grants citizenship via *jus sanguines* (Latin for "right by blood") to people who have a German parent. Israel's Law of Return, meanwhile, allows any Jew to move permanently to Israel and become a citizen. The United States grants citizenship rights both to people who are born in American territory and to people who have an American parent

2. *Dynamism:*

Political culture changes over time, but these changes often happen slowly. People frequently become set in their ways and refuse to alter their attitudes on significant issues. Sometimes it can take generations for major shifts to occur in a nation's political culture. One example of the ways in which American political culture has been slow to change concerns the rights of minorities. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 authorized federal troops to supervise balloting in federal elections in the South in order to protect the voting rights of black Americans. Even though the bill passed forty years ago, many government officials fear that racial tensions in the South could still threaten the political freedoms of blacks, which is why Congress and President George W. Bush reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 2006.

3. *Nation-Building:*

Political culture has presented great difficulties to the military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan engaged in nation-building during the early years of the twenty-first century. The United States is trying to build liberal democracies in these states, but in both places, long-held attitudes toward women and other ethnic groups, along with habits of obedience shaped by years of tyranny, have interfered. As a result, establishing democracies in these states could take a very long time.

4. *Typologies:*

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 Lipset's formative events theory, which describes the long-lasting effects of key events that took place when a country was founded; Louis Hartz'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.

III. ROLE OF POLITICAL CULTURE GLOBALLY

Political countries differ from country to country. For example, Japanese citizens are more comfortable with authority and hierarchical structures, while Swedes tend to be less mistrustful of government and more open to social programs that will benefit the underserved than Americans. American political culture can be defined according to some basic and commonly shared beliefs, such as our commitment to democracy, equality, free enterprise, and individualism. Concepts related to liberty, nationalism, and reliance on a legislative body, instead of an individual ruler, are also unique to our political culture. The historical origins of our political culture can be traced to the American Revolution and the desire for liberty as well as our Puritan roots. Some key events and programs that affected our sense of achievement and nationalistic pride include the Industrial Revolution, World Wars I and II, and the events of September 11, 2001.

Japan is a constitutional democracy; after World War II, officials from the United States wrote the country's constitution. In Japan, however, good relations and harmony are considered much more important than in the U.S. The concept of hierarchy, both familial and political, is deeply rooted in Japanese political culture. In comparison to Americans, the Japanese demonstrate more respect for authority, as evidenced by their interactions with elder family members and leaders.

Indian political culture bears the impact of the ideology of democratic socialism. Sometimes, the difference of ideological interpretations may lead to internal discontent and disaffection and eventually destroy rather than enhance the unity of the collectivity. The socio-economic factors always play a deterministic role in laying down the foundation of the political culture. A predominantly urban, industrialized society is a more complex society. Putting a premium on rapid communication, limits of poverty, employment, urbanization, literacy etc, play a leading role in shaping the political culture of the society. A predominantly urban, industrialized society is a more complex society, putting a premium on rapid communication. Industrialization is an important factor in changing values and attitudes. Rapid influx of immigrants, war, and revolution all may provoke changes in political values and beliefs with subsequent strains on the Political System. A political culture is not static but will respond to new ideas generated from within the political system or imparted or imposed from outside. In ancient India, monarchy prevailed and people were not politically aware and the political culture was parochial in nature. However, with the coming of the British the different Kingdoms in India were consolidated in the hands of a single political power, i.e., the British. The discontentment of the people during the British period made the people aware of their rights and duties. The political culture in India showed a marked change. Earlier, politics was confined to a certain few of the population but now politics became broadened and caste factor begun to influence the Indian polity. The national movement made the people politically aware. When the British left India in 1947, India embraced the parliamentary form of government, the idea of which was borrowed from the British. The first general elections were held in India in 1952. The constitution of India permits every adult reaching 18 years of age to cast their votes without any restriction. The people are now increasing their political participation and the political culture exhibits the "participant type of political culture". Political culture is undoubtedly connected with the study of politics. The study of political culture is related to the study of political defection, political corruption, political stratification, political socialization, pressure group, political behaviors, voting behaviors etc. The political system of a country having standard political culture can easily face grave dangers. Indian polity seems redefined in recent years from what it was conceived for almost six decades ago State has come to dominate not serve civil society in recent history.

IV. POLITICAL CULTURE TODAY

Political culture is a recent term which seeks to make more explicit and systematic much of the understanding associated with such long-standing concepts as political ideology, national ethos and spirit, national political psychology, and the fundamental values of a people. Political culture, by embracing the political orientations of both leaders and citizens, is more inclusive than such terms as political style or operational code, which focus on elite behavior. On the other hand, the term is more explicitly political and hence more restrictive than such concepts as public opinion and national character. The concept of political culture can be seen as a natural evolution in the growth of the behavioral approach in political analysis, for it represents an attempt to apply to problems of aggregate or systemic analysis the kinds of insights and knowledge which were developed initially by studying the political behavior of individuals and small groups.

More specifically, the concept of political culture was developed in response to the need to bridge a growing gap in the behavioral approach between the level of microanalysis, based on the psychological interpretations of the individual's political behavior, and the level of macro analysis, based on the variables common to political sociology. In this sense the concept constitutes an attempt to integrate psychology and sociology so as to be able to apply to dynamic political analysis both the revolutionary findings of modern depth psychology and recent advances in sociological techniques for measuring attitudes in mass



societies. Within the discipline of political science, the emphasis on political culture signals an effort to apply an essentially behavioral form of analysis to the study of such traditional problems as political ideology, legitimacy, sovereignty, nationhood, and the rule of law.

V. POLITICAL CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION

Intellectual curiosity about the roots of national differences in politics dates from the writing of Herodotus, and possibly no recent studies have achieved the richness of understanding of such classic studies of national temperament as those by Tocqueville, Bryce, and Emerson. But the dynamic intellectual tradition which inspired political culture studies comes almost entirely from the studies of national character and the psycho cultural analyses of the 1930s and 1940s. Benedict (1934; 1946), Mead (1942; 1953), Gorer (1948; 1953; 1955), Fromm (1941), and Klineberg (1950) all sought to utilize the findings of psychoanalysis and cultural anthropology to provide deeper understanding of national political behavior. A major objection to these studies was their failure to recognize that the political sphere constitutes a distinct subculture with its own rules of conduct and its distinct processes of socialization. The practice of moving directly from the stage of child training to the level of national decision making meant that crucial intervening processes were neglected.

Problems of continuity and discontinuity also require analysis of the relations between socialization and the political culture. Historical events within the political system may demand changes in the political culture which are inconsistent with either past or present socialization processes. In all dynamic political systems, tensions are possible because the socialization process cannot change as rapidly as the political process. This problem becomes profoundly acute when there is a sudden change in the international status of a society, for instance, when a colony gains independence. One of the basic sources of instability and ineffectualness in many newly developing countries lies precisely in the differences between the emphasis of the socialization processes which produced the various strata of the contemporary society and the attitudes necessary for operating a national political process.

Socializing agents:

In shaping the political culture the political socialization process operates in terms of various socializing agents. Some of these agents, such as the family, tend to be prominent at the early phases of the socialization process, and thus their influences are most closely related to personality characteristics fundamental to the political culture. Other socializing agents, such as the mass media and political parties, tend to become critical at later stages and thus are primarily involved in influencing the more cognitive aspects of the political culture.

Much current research on different political cultures has sought to determine the relative importance of different kinds of socializing agents in shaping different aspects of the political culture and, thus, in evaluating the links between the sociological structure of the society and the political process. The family, for example, according to Hyman (1959), is peculiarly potent in the United States in determining party loyalties, while formal education, according to Almond and Verba (1963) is most vital in producing commitment to democratic values. In studies of the transitional political systems of the underdeveloped countries, it has become apparent that the intensely politicized nature of these societies is often the result of the dominant role of partisan as against nonpartisan or constitutional agents of socialization. It is noteworthy that the trend toward one-party systems in sub-Saharan Africa is closely associated with the fact that nationalist parties were the only strong agency for socializing most of the newly politically conscious masses (Hanna 1964). When nonpartisan or politically neutral socializing agents are weak, social life tends to become highly politicized, and little appreciation is likely to exist for such fundamental constitutional institutions as an impartial bureaucracy and the rule of law. Studies of the process of nation building in societies in which the mass media are weak and cannot provide an objective view of national events suggests that constitutional development cannot become readily institutionalized under such conditions. This relationship between the socialization process and the ensuing political culture explains some basic difficulties in creating national institutions in countries where popular political consciousness was inspired by highly partisan and ideologically oriented independence movements.

Elite and mass subcultures:

In all societies there are inevitably some differences between the political orientations of those who have responsibility for decisions and those who are only observers or participating citizens. A national political culture thus consists of both an elite subculture and a mass subculture, and the relationship between the two is another critical factor determining the performance of the political system. The relationship determines such crucial matters as the basis of legitimacy of government, the freedom and limitations of leadership, the limits of political mobilization, and the possibilities for orderly transfers of power.

In most traditional, and many transitional, systems those destined for leadership positions tend to have quite different career lines, receive quite different forms of education, and have quite different social experiences from the mass of their followers. Even in many transitional societies the very basis of legitimacy of the leaders rests on the popular belief that they are men inherently set apart from others at birth.

A basic problem in the dynamics of political cultures relates to uneven changes in the socialization patterns of the two subcultures. Serious difficulties for the political system can arise when rulers discover that the mass subculture is no longer responsive to traditional leadership patterns but that they themselves have little skill in more modern ways of ruling. Or the opposite problem can arise when the elite subculture has been changed significantly by new patterns of elite socialization but the mass culture remains largely unchanged. Under such conditions leaders may be impatient for change, and in displaying little



understanding and even outright scorn for the essential qualities of the mass culture they may create resentment in the population, who may feel that their leaders have lost their sense of the proprieties of ruling.

VI. THE CONTENT OF POLITICAL CULTURES

The content of political cultures is in large measure unique to each particular society. Studies of different political cultures therefore tend to emphasize different themes, and the ultimate test of the utility of a theory of political culture will depend upon its value for comparative and generalized analysis. Already there have been promising pioneering advances in comparative analysis in which similar qualities of political cultures have been related to a common type of political system. For example, Almond and Verba (1963) have identified the “civic culture” which underlies democratic political systems.

It would seem possible also to isolate some universal dimensions of political cultures in terms of certain inherent qualities of both political systems and the processes of personality formation. Nathan Leites (1951; 1953) has demonstrated the value of analyzing elite political behavior character logically. It seems likely that further research will reveal that political cultures tend to manifest definable syndromes that are related either to recognized patterns of personality development or to general patterns of historical development, or to both. At this stage of knowledge it is possible only to suggest certain universal problems or themes with which all political cultures must deal in one manner or another.

VII. SCOPE AND FUNCTION OF POLITICS

Every political culture must define for its society the generally accepted scope or limits of politics and the legitimate boundaries between the public and private spheres of life. Scope involves definition of the accepted participants in the political process, the range of permissible issues, and the recognized functions of both the political process as a whole and the separate agencies or domains of decision making which collectively constitute the political process.

The scope of participants is in most systems formally defined by the requirements of citizenship, but in all systems there are usually also formal or informal limits relating to age, sex, social status, training, family connections, and the like which govern the recruitment process.

Similarly, in most political cultures certain issues are recognized as being outside the domain of politics or the jurisdiction of particular parts or agencies of the political process. The relationship of issues and functions can be highly specialized in the sense that particular issues are recognized as being the special responsibility of special forms of decision making, such as electoral, parliamentary, bureaucratic, juridical, or technocratic expertise.

In democratic political cultures there is usually a clear sense of the appropriate boundaries of political life, explicit recognition of new issues as they arise, and respect to some degree for functional specialization in the handling of issues and for the relative autonomy of the different domains of political decision making. In totalitarian cultures there are few established boundaries of the political sphere of activity, explicit knowledge that all issues can become political, and some respect for functional specializations but little for the autonomy of the different domains. In transitional systems there are usually no clearly accepted boundaries of political life, but the impotence of politics provides actual limits: there is an expectation that all matters can become politicized, and there is little functional specialization or autonomy in the various domains of political decision making.

Political integration:

In varying ways and in differing degrees, political cultures provide people with a sense of national identity and a feeling of belonging to particular political systems. Basic to the problems of the integration of the political system is that of establishing a sense of national identity, and the problem of national identity is in turn a function of the process by which individuals realize their own separate senses of identity. This basic relationship between national identity and personal identity provides a fundamental link between the socialization process and the integration of the political process.

Integration also involves the relationships of the various structures involved in the political process, and hence is related to the problems of specialization of function among decision-making groups discussed above.

A third aspect of integration concerns the manner in which various sub-communities, ethnic or regional groups, or subcultures are related to each other. Political cultures differ according to the extent to which they permit such minorities to preserve their separate identities while meeting the expected standards of integration.

Status of politics and politicians:

In traditional societies, religion, war, and government provided the elite, and the art of ruling was seen as having a sacred origin. Leadership carried high visibility, and those who shared in decision making could claim glory and greatness. Modern political cultures, reflecting an increased division of labor and the rise of secular considerations, tend to accept politics as only one of many professions and to debase the role of politician, even while still extolling the supreme importance of state and nation.

A political culture must establish the generally acceptable rewards and penalties for active political participation. In traditional societies the high status of leaders also meant that those with power could legitimately expect high material rewards. With the emergence of other professions and the contraction of the political sphere, the material rewards of those who enter public life



decreased, and they were increasingly expected to make personal sacrifices for performing public services. The political culture, in controlling the accepted balance between rewards and penalties for those entering public life, also tends to control the quality of people recruited. In democratic political cultures the desire to shackle power produces the requirement that those who seek power should have no self-interests but only serve the interest of others; and the suspicion that this is not always the case lowers popular esteem for politicians as a class. Political cultures, in creating the distinctions between statesmen and politicians, provide another basis for rewarding and controlling those who seek power.

Evaluating performance:

All political cultures contain standards for evaluating the effectiveness and competence of those performing specialized roles in the political system. Such standards generally depend upon popular views as to how national and community-wide problems should best be solved. In traditional cultures, problem solving was usually associated with the correct performance of rituals, and hence evaluation of performance was strongly influenced by skills displayed in ceremonies. Although modern political cultures recognize the central place of rationality in problem solving, there tend to be great differences among cultures in what is accepted as being rational. Judgment about skill in leadership is also influenced by the extent to which a society values the personal magnetism of leadership or the abilities of technical specialists and experts. Changes in the evaluative dimension of political cultures occur as new skills and professions are recognized as being relevant for solving national problems.

The evaluative aspect of political cultures must also reflect the inescapable fact that politics deals with future contingencies which lie beyond the range of ready prediction. Each political culture must provide some basis of faith in the forecasting powers of acceptable leaders. Traditionally, this faith was usually placed in the mystical and charismatic powers of personal leadership. In other cultures either divine or secularly inspired doctrines are presumed to be endowed with all necessary predictive powers. In still other cultures the very massiveness and essentially esoteric operation of bureaucracies and the complex machineries of government are enough to generate a popular faith that those in power have a grasp of the future. The ultimate test of leadership in all cases is skill in maintaining popular faith in the leader's capacity to deal with all possible contingencies.

VIII. CONCLUSION

At present the mere term "political culture" is capable of evoking quick intuitive understanding, so that people often feel that without further and explicit definition they can appreciate its meanings and freely use it. The very ease, with which the term can be used, however, means that there is considerable danger that it will be employed as a "missing link" to fill in anything that cannot be explained in political analysis. This danger of tautology is particularly great in precisely the area which is now the most important for the future development of the theory—the relationship between political culture and political structures or institutions. If the concept of political culture is to be effectively utilized, it needs to be supplemented with structural analysis, but the difficulty is that political structures can be seen on the one hand as products reflecting the political culture, while on the other hand they are also important "givens" which shape the political culture. Even in its current state, the theory of political culture represents a significant advance in the direction of integrating psychology and sociology with political science to produce a richer and fuller understanding of politics. It helps build community and facilitate communication because people share an understanding of how and why political events, actions and experiences occur in the country.

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