

## CHANGING DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL CULTURE

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**Abstract.** *If we define culture as the sum up of knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other shared common traits of a nation, so the complex of those attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and values of society which relate to the political system and to political issues, is called “political culture” which usually symbolized by national flag and national anthem.*

*Political culture of a nation is determined through the geographical, climatic, historical, and religious features of the nation. As political culture deals with the attitudes, behaviors, views and perceptions which are changing variables and dynamics issues, so it is obvious that political culture is liable to change. A political culture is not static, it changes as a result of its response to new ideas, industrialization, the impact of new leaders, population changes and many other factor. Within a political system the role of political culture is diverse in nature. This characterizes the dynamic view of political culture. All political system are subject to change in macro-level, as well in micro-level the individual's attitudes, believes, values and orientations are also changeable. As beliefs and values of the people change with the change of time, so culture as a whole and political culture as its part is subject to change, but every substantive change in the political culture of a nation might takes decades or even centuries. However, no government, nowadays, can to prevent its citizens from political awareness. Technology, mass media communications, internet and the like, with the impact of “globalization” are the causes which give more dynamics to the political cultures.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Political culture, Dynamics, Sub-culture, Congruence, Ideology.*

**Introduction:**

There is no general coherence in the nature of political culture of different nations. It differs in its origin. Political culture denotes the attitudes, orientations, sentiments, values and believes of the individuals towards the political objects which prompt him to behave in the political sphere in one way and not in other. But the orientations of the people towards their political system may differ from political system to another. While China have a communist culture, USA and UK have essentially, democratic culture. (Jena, 2002)

A study of different political system of the world, whether western and developed or eastern and developing signals that political culture plays a very important role in the sphere of political stability and change. As difference between Britain and France shows, while the conventional view of the French political culture may be seen in the appreciation of absolute conception of authority, the traditional view of Britain political culture is seen in the appreciation of popular control of the government. (Johari, 2011).

Political culture has played and till plays a dominant role in development of the countries as well. While, developed political cultures are more ready to accept, and attempt to bring new changes in different fields of political sphere, the developing political cultures are less able to lead new changes in their political system. And where is no change, there is no development.

In this paper first we will discuss about nature of political culture and then will review the effective factors on the dynamics of political culture and point to the few examples of new changes in some political cultures.

## **Nature of Culture and Political Culture**

As political culture is a part of general culture, so first we should know **what is culture?**

Alike the other social conceptions, there are many definitions about culture which we point to some of them.

Taylor defined it as "That complex whole of which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society."

According to Graham Wallas, "Culture is an accumulation of thoughts, values and objects, it is the social heritage acquired by us from preceding generations through learning, as distinguished from the biological heritage which is passed on to us automatically through genes."

H.V. Wiseman says, "Culture, simply, is part of the common orientation of two or more people." Orientation includes three elements. Firstly, the cognitive i.e. the knowledge of the physical and social world of those who share the same culture. Secondly, beliefs which in empirical terms are neither true nor false. Thirdly, there are values which is difficult to separate from attitudes. (Puri, 1997)

## **What is political culture?**

The term political culture was first used by Gabriel Almond in political terminology in 1956. According to Almond, political culture is not the same things as a general culture, although related to it. It is a differentiated part of general culture and has a certain autonomy.

Whereas, to Beer and Ulam, "Certain aspects of the general culture of the society are especially concerned with how government ought to be conducted and what it shall try to do.

This section of culture, we call political culture."

To Alan R. Ball, "A 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 held, but may be implicit in an individual or group relationship with the political system." (Puri, 1997)

## **Components of Political culture**

According to Almond and Powell, political culture involves three components of orientations; Cognitive orientations, Affective orientations, and Evaluation orientations.

Cognitive orientations mean, "knowledge of and beliefs about the political system, its roles, its objects and officials its inputs and outputs.

Affective orientations mean, feelings of attachment, involvement, rejection and the like about the political system, its personnel and performance and about other political objects.

Evaluation orientations mean, judgement and opinions about political objects which usually involve applying value standards to political objects and events. (Puri, 1997)

## **Foundation of political culture**

A political culture depends upon the fact of people's attitudes and beliefs towards the political system. These attitudes and beliefs are the product of several inter-related factors; history, geography and socio-economic.

## **History**

A study of history gives sufficient evidence to prove the continuity or discontinuity of a political system, besides the foundations of a political culture can well be known. According to Ball, the importance of political continuity in a country like Britain, for example, lies in the fact

that their older values, have been allowed to merge with modern attitudes, undisturbed by violent internal strife or domination by foreign power. While the revolution of 1789 overthrow the existence structures of France, the English leaders keep their country from as upheaval by giving more rights and freedoms in political sphere for the people. Such a political culture had its impact upon the fate of the colonies as well. The Indian learnt from their British masters the values of parliamentary democracy and the efficacy of constitutional means. The people of Algeria and Vietnam learnt from their French masters the lessons of revolutionary struggle.

### **Geography**

Geography plays its own part in laying the foundation of a political culture. The insular character of the Britain Isles protected the country from foreign invasion. On the other hand, the limitless frontier of a country like India opened the ways for the foreigners to invade and even stay here many years.

### **Socio-economic**

According to Ball, "a predominantly urban industrialized society is a more complex society, rapid communications, educational standards are higher, groups proliferate, and participation in the decision-making process is wider. Rural societies are not geared to change and innovation, and the states with a predominantly peasant population are more conservatives. (Puri, 1997)

## **Types of Political Cultures and Measurement of the Dynamics of Diverse Political Cultures**

According to Kumar Saroj Jena, An individual's orientation, believes, sentiments, values and attitudes are directed towards his fellow beings other than self. An individual develops two kinds of orientations towards his fellow beings, trust or hostility.

### **Trust**

An important aspect of political culture is a high level of inter-personal trust that facilitates the political cooperation and political involvement. Here the decisions are reached by mutual consensus through consultation and compromise. Individuals are engaging themselves in peaceful competition with those of opposing political views. This leads to integration of the members of a political system that ensures the stability of the political system.

### **Hostility**

When an individual tries to oppose each and every policy of the government in the out group, he develops hostile attitude towards other individuals exercising political actions. Thus there is no question of compromise, no development and no trust among the people in particular, and in the political system in general.

When an individual's attitudes, beliefs, sentiments, values, and norms are oriented towards his own self as a political actor, it is called the view of self. In this self-culture, the nature and extent of the individual orientation vary from society to society and this leads Almond and Powell to classify the self-culture as parochial, subject and participant types of political culture.

### **Parochial Political Culture**

When an individual becomes aware of his local system, local issues and involves himself in local politics, ignoring the national political system and national issues, it is called parochial political culture. Here an individual has no cognition of the political system. Beyond his locality, he has no involvement in the national input, output, feedback, and conversion process.



This type of political culture often exist in the traditional society where there is no specialized roles, and people are unaware of the national political system.

### **Subject Political Culture**

In this kind of culture there is a high frequency of orientation to the political system as a whole and also to the output process, but the cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations to the input structures and also towards the self as a political actor, is extremely low. He interprets his role as one in which he must accept the system as it is, not try to change it. This type of political culture is most prominent in East European countries and also in many newly independent nations of Asia and Africa.

### **Participant Political Culture**

In a participant political culture, the individual is seen and sees himself as an active participant in political process. Here his cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations are very high with regard to the political system as a whole, to the input, output, feedback and conversion process as well as to self as a political actor. It is also known as the rationally-activist political culture.

But, these three types of political cultures are only the ideals types; none of them can be found in its pure form in any society since all the individuals within a political system cannot be expected to behave or oriented in the same way and to the same extent. Accordingly, Almond and Verba lists out the following mixed types of political cultures:

Parochial-subject

Subject-participant

Parochial-participant

Civic political culture

In parochial-subject political culture, the individual has knowledge about a variety of governmental roles, although he is mostly unaware of the ways in which he can influence the political system. In this culture system, the sense of self as a political force is very much vague and undeveloped and the input structure of the society are poorly defined.

The subject-participant type is represented by a society where some of the citizens are very much politically aware and also active and the rest are relatively passive. Here the average citizens know that he must be active and be a participant, but is given little opportunity for sharing in the decisions.

In parochial-participant type of political culture, the input institutions are relatively local like tribal and caste associations, although the national output institutions are quite well developed. But, in any case, both the inputs and outputs institutions are so much under the pressure of parochial interests.

The civic culture is an ideal culture which combines the characteristics of the three ideal types of political culture: parochial, subject and participant. The citizens in a civic culture have a "reserve of influence". He is a potentially active citizen. According to Almond and Verba, Great Britain and United States reveals the closest approximation to this civic political culture. The culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permitted changes but moderated it. (Jena, 2002)

### **Signs of the Dynamics of Political Culture**

During the last half of the twentieth century, we saw much dramatic changes in various political cultures. For example, many African Americans become more willing to stand up vocally for their rights and in so doing become more politically active during 1950s and 1960s.

In turn, many white Americans developed more favorable attitudes towards their black fellow citizens and began to act accordingly. Today, no one can deny that considerable changes in political attitudes and behavior with respect to race have occurred in United States political culture since 1950. (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2012)

In the fifteen-year period from 1958 to 1973, governments were altered by military intervention in more than one out of every three countries. (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2012) Whereas, today, the military interventions considerably decrease except of few countries which rules by military governments, the most countries in the world governs by civilian rules. It shows that militaries come to accept the civilian rules.

We can see also considerable changes in the political culture of African countries which usually had governed by despotic and military regimes, since 1990s. Their people are seeking democratic governments and going towards democracy as a better form of governance.

The other sign of change in political culture of the nations might be seen in recent Arabic revolutions in some of Arabic countries in the Middle East which is so-called “Arab Spring”. In these upheavals people of these countries overthrow the dictator regimes and ask for more popular governments, which amply illustrate basic changes in the political cultures of these countries.

Women movements are the other obvious example of change in political culture in most of the countries. While, till mid of twentieth century in European and American countries women had no political right, nowadays, they play major role in political life of most of these countries. However, political activities of women are less than men, but having the equal right in political sphere is a significant change in political cultures of most countries itself. (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2012)

### **Affective Factors in the dynamics of Political Culture**

Why is it that in modern societies with widespread education, universal suffrage, and democratic political systems the apolitical stratum is so large? This is the question which many of us asked ourselves. Robert A. Dahl and Bruce Stinebrickner present seven propositions which help to explain why people do not become involved in the politics of governing their state.

1- Individuals are less likely to get involved in politics if they place a low value on the rewards expected from political involvement relative to the rewards they expect from other kinds of activity.

2- If they think that there is no significant difference in the alternatives before them and, consequently, that what they do won't matter.

3- If they think that what they do won't matter because they can't significantly change the outcome anyway.

4- If they believe that the outcome will be relatively satisfactory to them without their involvement.

5- If they feel that their knowledge is too limited for them to be effective.

6- The greater the obstacles placed in an individual's way, the less likely that person is to become involved in politics.

7- If no person or group mobilizes them to get involved in politics. (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2012)

The main factors affective on the dynamics or static of political culture may briefly summarize in the following:

Congruence and incongruence or homogeneous and heterogeneous of society seriously impact in changing dynamics of political culture. (Johari, 2011) In stable societies, the political culture is homogeneous, but when a particular set of political orientations is distinguishable from others in the system, we speak of a political sub-culture. For example, many French Canadians feel that loyalty to their group is more important than loyalty to Canada as a whole. (Puri, 1997)

Political subcultures may grow on the basis of region, religion, social class, caste, language, and the like. These subcultures play a significant role in the process of nation building.

The existence of such political subcultures may have its positive and negative consequences. In the positive aspect, the existence of variety of subcultures help in a significant way to understand better the national political culture and its process. But judging from a negative aspect, the existence of such a wide range of political subcultures may kill the consensus in political system. It may also cause a harm to the common national identity. As such it has a vital impact on the range of conflicts and the complexity of those conflicts between the national political culture and various subcultures. (Jena, 2002)

The role of ideology must also be considered significant in the formation and change of people's attitudes and orientations towards the being political system. The role of ideology in political culture can be studied from two; rigid and flexible viewpoints. In its rigid dimension as taken by the Marxists and Fascists, it does not allow opposite opinion at all. Ideology, therefore, in rigid dimension become impediment for changing the political culture. In its flexible dimension, an ideology can appreciate various thoughts, opinions and orientations which give dynamical character to the political culture. (Johari, 2011)

Religion has played a major role in shaping American political culture (for example, the Puritans from colonial times and the religion Right today). Similarly, one cannot study Western civilization or the various national culture of Europe without reference to Roman Catholicism, the Reformation, and Christianity in general.

By the same taken, that Islam is deeply imprinted on the cultures of the Arab Middle East, as well as much of South, Central, and Southeast Asia and also North of Africa, is a well-known fact. The same can be said of Hinduism in India; Buddhism in Cambodia, Tibet and Thailand; Taoism and Confucianism in China; and Shinto, as well as Buddhism in Japan.

They all point to the fact that religions and cultures are two sides of a single coin everywhere in the world. Even where the secularization has eroded religious beliefs (as in the West) the stamp of religion on moral values and political culture is indelible. (Magstadt, 2006)

The kind of existence political system has considerable role in the speed of dynamic of political culture. (Johari, 2011) While, political culture in democratic countries is more dynamic, in the totalitarian regimes change in political culture seems so difficult and time-consuming process.

A political culture functions as a legitimization instrument. The system is based on authority, authority on legitimacy and legitimacy is based on culture. The higher level of congruence between the masses and the greater interpersonal trust and confidence, the stable the political culture will be. In fact, every society shows a fundamental difference between the culture of the rulers and that of the masses.

The higher is the congruence between these two cultures- the elite culture and mass culture, the greater is the homogeneity of the political culture that ensures the stability of the political system. (Jena, 2002)



The influence of political elites, the leaders, activists and writers, who play the major role in creating and interpreting the political formula of a nation, in changing political culture should also be considered significantly. (Johari, 2011)

## Conclusion:

Political culture denotes the attitudes, orientations, sentiments, values and believes of the individuals towards the political objects and issues of their system and in some cases towards global political issues. These attitudes, orientations and beliefs are the product of several inter-related factors; history, geography and socio-economic circumstances of a nation. However, beliefs and values of the people change with the change of time, so culture as a whole and political culture as its part is subject to change, but as J.C. Johari announces, evidences show that a sudden or total change leads to the breakdown of the new political system, because the tradition-bound people do not appreciate those changes which stand in total contradiction to the values of their conventional culture. On the other hand, the leaders who strive for a gradual change get more success in their endeavours. So, the stability and integration of the political culture depend on promoting orderly change and achieving a political consensus depends on the politician's ability to control a balance between the old and the new.

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