

POLITICAL CULTURE

What is political culture?

The most significant development of the post-World War II period was the rise of a new approach to the study of political science which gave birth to a large number of new concepts of which political culture is one. To know the working of any political system, it is necessary to know the political culture of that nation. In effect, the term 'political culture' has been popularized by the American political thinkers like Ulam, Beer and Almond and it is now being used frequently to compare the different political systems. The concept has now enabled the different political scientists to distinguish one system from the other not only in terms of its structure but also the political culture in which it grows. It is political culture which explains satisfactorily the phenomenon why the parliamentary democracy has succeeded so well in Great Britain but not succeeded in most of the countries of Asia and Africa. According to Almond and Powell, 'political culture consists of attitudes, beliefs, values and skills which are current in an entire population, as well as those special propensities and patterns which may be found within separate parts of that population'.

Dimensions of political culture

According to Almond and Powell, the concept of political culture involves three components of individual orientation: cognitive orientations, effective orientations and evaluative orientations. Cognitive orientations mean how an individual develops knowledge and belief about a particular political system, its role, its objectives and officials, its inputs and outputs. These knowledge and belief may be grown within the particular environment in which an individual is grown. Effective orientations mean that an individual may attach himself with a particular political system or get involved in it directly or even reject it. Evaluative orientations mean that an individual may give his/her judgments and opinions about political system and objects. These judgments and opinions indicate value standards given to various political objects and events.

Types of political culture

It has been observed that the political culture of one country fundamentally differs from other countries. There is no country in the world which can boast of single uniform political culture. Almond and Verba have listed three ideal types of political culture. They are described below.

1. **Parochial political culture:** Where the people have no understanding of the national political system, do not possess any tendency to participate in the input processes and have no consciousness of the output processes, such a type of political culture is called parochial political culture. African tribes and Eskimos fall in this category. Such a type of people have no role to play in the political culture.

2. **Subject political culture:** This type of political culture is found in the subject countries and monarchies. There the people are aware of the governmental system whether they like it or not. They also know the role of the government regarding law-making, enforcement of laws and tax collection etc. In this type of culture, people are not taught to participate in the input functions. Sometimes, they are not allowed to do so, as a result, the people find it difficult to influence the working of the political system.
3. **Participant political culture:** In this type of political culture, people are quite keen to participate in the political system and influence its working. They are always busy making reasonable demands on the political system and are involved in the making of decisions. They develop a particular attitude towards the political system. Political parties, pressure groups, interest groups fall in this category and decide for themselves what role they can play.

Determinants of political culture

Political continuity, colonial domination, geography, ethnic differences, religious differences and socio-economic structure play an important part in developing political culture. Political continuity plays an important part in the development of political culture. The political culture of Britain has been influenced by political continuity in that country. If there had been no political continuity for a long time, there was no scope for the development of the particular political culture in that country. Unlike Britain, the political structure in France was shaken by the French Revolution of 1789 and that the events that followed. A similar thing happened in Russia as a result of the Revolution of 1917.

Political culture is also affected by colonial domination and imperialist control. The political culture of India has been influenced by the British rule in India for about two centuries. Likewise, the political culture in Africa, Indonesia, China and Sri Lanka has been influenced by foreign domination. A particular type of colonial domination has its own effect. We have the example of Congo where the Belgian authorities created a particular type of political culture different from that created by British or French domination in other countries. The geographical factor also shapes the political culture of a country. The insular position of England created a political culture different from that of the countries on the continent. Likewise, the US has developed a political culture different from that of England and other European countries.

Ethnic differences also influence the political culture of a country. If there had been no racial differences in Africa, the political culture of the countries in that continent would have been different. However, racial differences can be removed by mutual understanding and tolerance. Religious homogeneity or differences have their effect on the political culture of a country. The religious differences in India have affected its political culture. Those differences led to the partition of the Indian Sub-Continent in 1947. The same religious differences mould the political culture of India even now. The Sikhs of the Punjab are an outstanding example.

The political culture of a country is also influenced by its socio-economic structure. These differences explain the differences of political cultures of the countries.

