

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF 'POLITICAL CULTURE'

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Abstract

This article analyzes the philosophical essence of the concepts of “culture” and “political culture,” their formation factors, and their role in the development of society. The nature of culture as a social phenomenon, its close connection with human activity, and its manifestation as a system of values are revealed. In addition, the structural elements of political culture, its relationship with citizens’ political consciousness and behavior, and its importance in the development of a democratic society are examined from a philosophical perspective. Special attention is given to the issues of enhancing political culture in modern society.

Keywords: culture, political culture, philosophical analysis, social consciousness, system of values, political consciousness, civil society, democracy, social development, political behavior

Introduction

Political culture is a broad and multifaceted socio-philosophical concept that encompasses various aspects of social life. When analyzing it within the system of relations between the state and society, it is important to take into account the specific features of its formation and development. Cultural, historical, national, and geographical factors play a decisive role in the development of political culture, and their interaction determines the essence of this phenomenon.

The theory of political culture is distinguished by its focus on deeply studying issues related to human values, social stereotypes, systems of symbols, and human mentality. This approach makes it possible to understand more deeply the motivation of citizens’ political behavior and to identify the causes of socio-political conflicts that are difficult to explain within traditional political analysis. From this perspective, the study of political culture requires a comprehensive analysis of processes such as the struggle for power and the redistribution of resources.

Literature Review

The term “political culture” in its broad philosophical sense was introduced by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who studied the interaction between culture and politics. In his work *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*, he first introduced expressions such as “political culture,” “maturity of political culture,” and “carriers of political culture” into scientific discourse¹.

Political culture became integrated into the categories of political and social sciences in the mid-1960s. In the 20th century, the works of American political scientists Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba played a particularly important role in the institutionalization of this concept². In particular, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they published a series of works devoted to the study of socio-political phenomena.

Intellectual foundations of political culture can also be found in the works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Alexis de Tocqueville, Montesquieu, and even ancient authors. However, the

¹ Гердер, И.Г. Идеи к философии истории человечества. – М.: Наука, 1977. с. 339, 364.

² Almond G., Verba S. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in five Countries*. Princeton Legacy Library, (1963 copyright), 2016. 576 p.

modern origin of the concept of political culture began, as noted above, with Almond's 1956 article "Comparative Political Systems." According to him, "every political system is based on a specific model of political orientation"; he called such orientation and the factors that motivate citizens to make important decisions "political culture." He also interpreted the then-popular term "ideology" as "a systematic and clear expression of general orientation toward politics." Later, Almond rejected terms such as "political attitudes," "political values," "national character," and "cultural ethos" as not specific to political culture, considering them "unstable and overlapping." Interestingly, the political attitudes, values, and similar concepts he mentioned later became standard elements of political culture and remain so today.

Discussion

As structural elements, political culture includes the culture of political activity, the culture of political consciousness, and the culture of functioning of political institutions. If political culture is considered at the individual level, it includes political knowledge, political beliefs, and political behavior.

According to Professor A. I. Soloviev of Moscow State University, political culture should be understood as a value-based phenomenon that transmits positive traditions of power to the subject and is embodied in typical forms of exercising political roles and functions, as well as styles of political behavior. It reflects the level of assimilation and creative development by individuals of socially recognized thinking and behavior in the sphere of power³.

Among modern scientific sources, researchers consider the most comprehensive definition to be that proposed by the Russian scholar Y. Batalov. According to him, political culture can be described as a historically formed, relatively stable system of representative beliefs, ideas, attitudes toward consciousness, and behavioral patterns. It manifests itself in the direct activities of subjects of the political process, in determining their main orientations and forms, thereby ensuring the reproduction and further evolution of political life based on continuity⁴. In short, it is a set of political knowledge, beliefs, and principles manifested in the methods and outcomes of citizens' political activity.

Results

Culture, and its specific type—political culture—is usually defined and studied as a macro-level phenomenon. For example, Elkins and Simeon argued that political culture is a "collective property" of entities such as nations, regions, classes, ethnic communities, formal organizations, and others. According to the authors, it is not individual culture that matters, but rather shared attitudes, beliefs, and values⁵. They emphasized the need to develop specific methods for identifying cultural units in different contexts.

Hofstede stated that "culture is collective programming," defining it as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group from another."⁶ In his other

³ Соловьев, А.И. Политическая культура: проблемное поле метатеории // Вестник Московского университета. "Политические науки". 1995. — № 3. — 13 с.

⁴ Баталов, Э.Я. Политическая культура современного американского общества / Э.Я. Баталов. – М.: Наука, 1990. – с 116 – 117.

⁵ Elkins, David J., and Richard E. B. Simeon. 1979. "A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?". *Comparative Politics*. 11 (2): 127-45.

⁶ Hofstede, Geert H. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications.

works, including *Culture's Consequences*, he used similar definitions and also distinguished between “values” and “personality” at the individual level of cultural comparison⁷.

There are also psychological or subjective definitions of political culture derived from concepts such as orientation, attitude, influence, cognition, feeling, and evaluation. For example, according to Almond and Verba, political culture refers to “the orientation toward a political system and its various parts, and toward oneself as a political actor.” Verba also defined political culture as “a system of beliefs about political interactions and institutions,” emphasizing that these beliefs are fundamental, relatively stable, and often implicit assumptions about politics. He later distinguished political culture from other psychological constructs such as party preferences and attitudes toward domestic and international political issues.

In the 1980s, Ronald Inglehart, one of the initiators of the revival of political culture studies, defined it as follows: “Political culture is the subjective dimension of societal institutions, consisting of beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills formed by the people of a given society, complementing systems of external coercion and exchange.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be observed that the concept of political culture as a psychological attribute of collectivity, in later studies, excluded the individual as its main structural element. This leads to at least two consequences:

- lack of explanation of psychological consequences;
- preference for macro-level explanations.

First, the relationship between individual-level political culture and other psychological constructs remains insufficiently studied and poorly defined. The influence of political culture on individuals is often described vaguely and has rarely been subjected to strict empirical testing.

Since Almond and Verba, researchers have frequently used psychological terms such as attitudes, orientations, beliefs, feelings, cognition, and values as components of political culture. However, at the same time, these psychological constructs are often treated as consequences of culture rather than clearly conceptualized elements. For example, Almond and Powell defined political culture as “a set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings toward politics existing at a given time,” noting that “political attitudes formed in past experience significantly influence future political behavior.”

They presented political culture as a tool for cognition, which limits the full range of possible alternative behaviors, problems, and solutions. However, the mechanisms by which political culture influences human consciousness and attention remain insufficiently studied and not fully explained.

⁷ Hofstede. 2001. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications. P. 5.