

Political Development and Political Decay

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Abstract

Political development in a country depends on political participation whereas political participation depends on institutionalization. Political development cannot take place in the absence of effective institutions that allow mass participation. The purpose of this paper is to distinguish political development from modernization and to identify political development with institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. Functional capabilities cannot be ensured without structures and institutions. Levels of political development in country can be measured by levels of system efficacy that is structural stratification and functional specialization. Demands, decisions and capabilities keep the political system dynamic which also shows that the development or decaying process is taking place. If the goal of development is to be achieved there should be higher levels of capabilities, efficacy and recruitment.

Keywords: Institutionalization, modernization, rationalization, mass mobilization, functional capabilities, system efficacy, political socialization, political participation

Introduction

“Among the laws that rule human societies” de Tocqueville said, “there is one which seems to be more precise and clear than all others. If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased.”¹ In the contemporary era now, political participation is increasing. The rates of mobilization and participation are high, the rates of organization and institutionalization are low.

Writers on political development emphasize the process of modernization and closely related phenomena of social mobilization and increasing political participation. Political development depends on political participation. Without participation development cannot be ensured, especially in this age government alone cannot bring about a change. To cope with the changing needs and to activate the system, we need mass participation.

Political development depends on political participation whereas political participation depends on institutionalization. Political development cannot be achieved without effective institutions allowing mass participation. Institutions have instrumental value. For this purpose, it is useful to distinguish political development from modernization and to identify political development with the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. To quote Prof Huntington: “Rapid increases in mobilization and participation, the principal political aspects of modernization, undermine political institutions. Rapid modernization, in brief, produces not political development but political decay.”²

Political Development as Modernization

Modernization is a multifaceted process that encompasses changes in all areas of human thought and activity. To quote Learner: “It is a process with some distinctive quality of its own, which would explain why modernity is felt as a consistent whole among people who live by its rules.”³

The political aspects of modernization constitute the political development. The goal of political modernization is the development of an institutional framework that is sufficiently flexible and powerful to meet the demands placed upon it.

The process of political modernization has three major characteristics:

- i) An increased centralization of power in the state, coupled with the weakening of traditional sources of authority;
- ii) The differentiation and specialization of political institutions;
- iii) Increased popular participation in politics and greater identification of individuals with the political system as a whole.

Political development and modernization are distinguishable. Higher the level of development does not constitute high level of modernization. To measure political development and equate with modernization there are three concepts:

- i) Parson has given the model of rationalization (system coherence) He talks about political system and its coherence. To measure level of development we see system moves from dysfunctionism to functionalism; from centralism to decentralism, from ascription to improvement.
- ii) The second set of characteristics identified with development involves nationalism and national integration. This model is given by Almond. Nation building is a key aspect of political development.
- iii) The third approach focuses on democratization, pluralism, competitiveness, equalization of power and similar qualities. "Political development denotes system rationalization, national integration and democratization."⁴ The characteristics of political development or political modernization which are frequently emphasized, however, are mobilization and participation.

Modernization, Karl Deutsch has emphasized, involves social mobilization and "this is the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour."⁵ Modernization means mobilization of manpower and material resources, decentralization and allowing participation on merit. Modernization depends on mobilization of resources which in turn effects positive political participation. It can be attained by increasing the level of literacy, adequate economic growth, industrialization, urbanization and increasing per capita income.

Another aspect of modernization is economic development. It refers to the growth in the total economic activity and output of a society. Social mobilization involves changes in the aspirations of individuals, groups and societies; economic development involves changes in their capabilities. Modernization requires both.⁶

Modernization means mass mobilization and mass mobilization means increased political participation, and increased participation is the key element of political development. Participation distinguishes "modern politics" from traditional politics. The traditional society is non-participant whereas modern society is participant society. To quote Almond and Verba: "The new world modern political culture will be a political culture of participation."⁷ In all the new nations of the world there is wide spread belief that ordinary man ought to be involved in political system. Large groups of people are demanding their participation in the functioning of the political system.

Political development may be defined by Rustow as "an increasing national political unity plus a broadening base of political participation."⁸ It has also been defined by Riggs as "process of politicization: increasing participation or involvement of the citizen in state activities, in power calculations and Consequences."⁹

Expansion of the universe of political participation accompanies the modernization process and is extended in a qualitative as well as quantitative sense. Political participation is dependent on the changes that occur in the modernization sector. In part, political participation is channeled by centrally placed political institutions and in turn, acts as a formidable independent source of change for those very political institutions.¹⁰

In the highly developed system as in USA and Britain, public is adequately mobilized, inducted into the system. In Britain, it is more because of political parties and pressure groups. In Communist states like former Soviet Union, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam and People's Republic of China, it is low. Same is the case in the Socialist states like Armenia and Azerbaijan. Mobilization is paramount but regimented. Ideology of communism is carried to each individual. In 3rd world, level of mobilization remains low and there is an element of political decay.

Udaya narrates that many developing and industrialized countries have recently experienced low level of political participation. This tendency gives birth to political inequality within society and the interest of some non participating groups remains unrepresented in important governmental policies. He further elaborates that the nation should base their political system on sound modernized principles.¹¹

Political Development as Institutionalization

The realization of political development hinges heavily on strong institutions particularly institutionalized political parties having moderate policies. The form and content of the centrally placed governing institutions in a society are crucial for the entire developmental process.¹² When the relationship between mobilization and participation is viewed on one hand, and growth of political organizations is observed on the other side, political development can be defined as “the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures.”¹³ Institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability.¹⁴ Level of institutionalization of any particular organization or procedure can be measured by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence.

According to Samuel P Huntington: “A system works through its institutions. The levels of institutionalization of any political system can be measured by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence.”¹⁵ Huntington explained that the presence of sound institutions assures economic and social stability which in turn gives prosperity to the political system. On the other hand, Rose Cranes says that “Political system works, if all the political processes are adopted and regularized.”¹⁶ So political development involves the capacity of political system “to control and to coordinate various processes of change in society generated by the social and structural changes.” Structures are the tools and the means to obtain the ultimate result. Functional capabilities cannot be ensured without structures. Europe particularly in this century developed structures and institutions. Organizations and institutions are unavoidable factor in the development process.

Levels of Political Development

The levels of political development can be gauged by the efficacy of the system. The elements like structural stratification and functional specialization are eminent in such a political system. Moreover, the system is responsive to public demands because it is based on the dogmas of political participation. In such circumstances where political participation is allowing economic and social development, and the institutions are working positively due to the presence of functional specialization; the outcome comes forward in the form of good governance.

If the functional capabilities of the political system do not work systematically as per the demands of the public, the chances of good governance decline. Outcomes determine whether the system is functioning correct or not. The declining phase of political development results in political decay.

Quantum of Structural Functional Advancement Determines System Efficacy

Political development has been defined as “the increased differentiation and specialization of political structures and the increased secularization of political culture.”¹⁷ The significance of such development is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of the political system: to increase its capabilities. The development of specialized structures for the aggregation of a wide range of interests into a limited number of policy alternatives tends to increase system capability in several ways. It creates a potential for greater system responsiveness and effectiveness. Without such structures “immobilism” in meeting system problems may result, as well as a failure to consider systematically the full range of articulated demands. The heavy load of raw unstructured demands may bring policy making to a halt.

If structures are stratified and functions are specialized, then it ensures system efficacy. According to David Easton, the functions are more important than the structures. He explains a political system “as having structural stratification and functional specialization ensures system efficacy. Efficacy of a system is defined as the capacity of the system to sustain and ensure development. Almond has stressed on structures. He argued that input functions are crucial in characterizing the political change in the system. In the highly developed states like in Britain level of system efficacy is high because of more public orientation. In USA it is also high. In the communal states it is high but the ultimate objective in the USSR was achieving communism. In the third world countries there are not well organized institutions and consequently low levels of mobilization and participation. Political development is not a developmental process but a decaying process.

For the betterment of people, sound institutions are required which will work tooth and nail for achieving good governance. Sebastian is of the view that institutions do significantly matter for growth and it is imperative that the developing countries should invest in governance- enhancing reforms of their institutions if they want to foster economic development.¹⁸

Quantum of Political Culture, Political Socialization and Political Participation Ensures Development

A political culture denotes the political psychology of the people. A political culture is composed of attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values of society that relate to the political system and to political issues. The quantum of cultural growth determines the level of awareness among individuals. Almond says that the cultural identity is to be acquired, safeguarded and developed. Nations fight for their independence because they want to preserve their cultural identity. In other words, Political culture is defined as “A short hand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates.”¹⁹

The function of the political system is to groom the different people with mixed culture into one coherent developed culture. Political culture plays a very important role in a sphere of political stability and change. As Apter says, “High congruity in the political culture equals great stability in the political system.”²⁰ In liberal democracies Britain came closest to the civic culture and was followed by the USA. In both societies respect for the government and faith in the national institutions has been high while the obligation to participate has received recognition from all circles of the society. The main contrast between the two countries was that the subject political culture remained more important in Britain than in the USA where participant attitude predominated. In the USSR, the new communist rulers were committed to increasing mass participation in politics. The old feudal systems had been characterized by passive acceptance of authority what Weber called traditional authority.²¹ In order to bring about a revolution in political culture, the communist citizen was to become an active participant in political life.

The Third World can be seen in terms of parochial political culture where citizens are not concerned about national government. Undoubtedly the state is weaker in the developing than in the developed world. It penetrates less deeply into society and so provides only a weak focus of public attention. The post independence generation of the Third World leaders sought to nationalize the political culture in the belief that this would strengthen the authority of the state but it met with little success.

The political socialization is regarded as the most promising process to understand political stability and development. When the population are trained according to their culture and norms and inducted into the system in such a way that they become well functioning members of the political community than these members recruited on merit in the political system. That system ensures developmental change. In Britain, which is highly developed system people are trained and made habitual by adopting constitutional means to effect change. In this way they are leading to the path of development whereas in the Third World countries process of socialization is not adopted properly. People are not oriented of their role, lack of awareness about political structures, no recruitment is done on merit, political culture is completely ignored, and result is that we have not touched the line of development.

While political culture is the study of people’s attitude towards government, political participation is the study of actual involvement in it. Political participation can be defined as “the activity by individuals formally indented to influence who governs or how they do so.”²² In all the three worlds governments now call upon public to play at least some part in the political process. These are traditional regimes where politics remains the exclusive preserve of tiny elite and those military governments which do not even bother with a democratic façade. In liberal democracies i.e. USA and Britain, the levels of political participation are high. There is voluntary participation. People can choose whether to get involved (e.g. by voting or abstaining) and how to get involved (e.g. by joining a party or signing petitions).

The dramatic transition from communist to post communist states transforms the nature of political participation in the second world. In the former Soviet Union regimented participation was the norm. This involved the expression of support for, rather than the selection of government personnel and policy. Its main function was to strengthen the authority of the government. The level of participation in the former Soviet Union was low.

This old style was dismantled in transition from communism to post communism. In post communist regimes, the task was to create more structured forms of voluntary participations through parties, elections and interest groups. In the Third World, mass political participation is typically limited in quantity and manipulated in quality. The reason is that populations are poorly educated and often illiterate. The state has achieved only limited penetration of the countryside. Political leaders are preoccupied with their own survival.

In these circumstances even the growing number of democratic countries in the Third world can hardly be expected to achieve the participation levels of liberal democracies.

In the third world, the patron-client relationship is the main instrument through which ordinary people are brought into contact with formal politics.²³ Patrons are landlords, ethnic leaders and they control the votes of their clients. The reason is that formal channels of participation like political parties, trade unions are weak. But poverty and inequality are more important causes.

A rapid increase in political participation and social change when coupled with imperfect integration and weak political institutions seems likely to produce instability. The long range stability and effectively functioning governmental organs can be attained, although the odds for the new states may seem unfavorable. The way in which the governments and political parties of new states influence modernization can be decisive in determining whether political development or political decay will occur.

Levels of Capabilities and Political Development

Any political system should be based on five capabilities. These are extractive, regulative, distributive, responsive, and symbolic capabilities. First of all, the 'extractive capability' focuses on extracting material and human resources. Material resources include the collection of revenue, whereas human resources include skilled and qualitative manpower. The skilled and qualitative human resources can attain the objectives of a successful political system. Any successful political system like that of the US uses fair practices to extract resources. Thus this extractive capability can be proved as a healthy input to the political system. Whereas, if this capability is misused; the political decay will be the outcome.

Secondly, the 'regulative capability' concentrates on the maintenance of prevailing laws and regulations. The style of regulating the behavior may vary from system to system. The use of force is minimal in liberal societies like the US and GB, but in developing countries like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, etc where people are often found breaching the law, coercive methods of regulations are used. The regulative capability is essential in all areas of services like health, business, economic, and welfare. The successful regulation of laws in any society will make the political system of that nation strong. Thirdly, the 'distributive capability' is the output aspect of any political system related to the allocation of goods and services, honor and opportunities of various kinds. It is imperative to maintain the equity among the citizens. Moreover, the equitable distribution of resources will make the political development sound and free of disturbances.

Fourthly, another output aspect of the political system is the 'symbolic capability' which has importance during times of emergency and crisis. The leaders of the nation mobilize the manpower through their charismatic speeches. It also determines the level of participation by the public in the political system of their country. Last but not the least is the 'response capability' which tries to maintain a relationship between inputs and outputs. This shows the responsiveness of the political system that is necessary for the existence of sound legitimate governing institutions of the nation.

The unity among these five attributes is very important. Together, they assure the positive results for the success of any prevailing political system. On the other hand, one of the common patterns of political instability among the new and modernizing nations has been a shift from capability patterns emphasizing distributiveness and responsiveness to one emphasizing regulation and symbolic satisfaction. In view of the overwhelming load to which these systems are subjected to attain any stable equilibrium, let alone a responsive one, is apt to be a prolonged and difficult process.

Conclusion

Demands, decisions, and capabilities are the essential attributes of any political system. The existence of any successful political system without these attributes is not possible.

The demands of the people, capabilities of the political system, and decisions of the political elites gives an outcome which shows the development process or decaying process in the political system. For the efficient working of a system, demands are vital. Demands are a stress on the system. As discussed earlier that demands behave as a stress on the political system and they also have a coercive force, called support. Demands call forth the system in action and perform according to its capabilities. If the political system of the nation fulfils the demands on time, economic and political development is the results but if not – chaos fallout in the form of political decay.

Capabilities of a political system depend on the structural functional specialization. Higher the level of structural functional specialization, higher is the system efficacy. If the quantum of socialization, culture, recruitment and participation is higher than there will be political development and social change, otherwise there will be political decay. If achieving development is the goal, high levels of capabilities, efficacy, and recruitments are the basic requirements. Manpower and natural resources are utilized for the achievement of efficacy. In highly developed states, levels of development are high because there are higher levels of system efficacy, political socialization, culture and participation and there is decaying element in the third world countries. According to Lucian Pye and Bundar, "For political development, specific levels of capabilities are needed. System should be responsive, integrative, adaptive and innovative."

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