Political Psychology: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The main objective of the research is to highlight the importance of Political Psychology and its impact on the political system of the states. The study focuses on the behavior of the political institutions and its link with political Psychology. The research explains the role of political psychology to shape the political judgments and decision making. The approach of the research is descriptive and analytical. The original and secondary sources are used in this study.

Keywords: Political Psychology, Historical Perspective, Voting Behavior.

Introduction

There are varying definitions and explanations of political psychology. It is academic field dedicated to the study of mental processes in the political systems. It is an important tool to explain politics. "Political psychology is an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics. It sees politics as the ultimate lab to examine general psychological phenomena (Andeweg, R.B.2003).

The researchers claim that nearly all politics and political science theories are psychological at root because they rest on assumptions, usually implicit, about how people think and feel. Political psychology is an interdisciplinary field to understanding politics, politicians and political behavior from a psychological perspective. The relationship between politics and psychology is considered bi-directional, with psychology being used a lens for understanding politics and politics being used as a lens for understanding psychology. As an interdisciplinary field, political psychology borrows from a wide range of disciplines, including: anthropology, sociology, international relations, economics, philosophy, media, journalism and history.

- Political psychology aims to understand interdependent relationships between individuals and contexts that are influenced by beliefs, motivation, perceptions, cognition, information processing, learning strategies, socialization and attitude formation.

- Political psychological theory and approaches have been applied in many contexts such as: leadership role; domestic and foreign policy making; behavior in ethnic violence; war and genocide; group dynamics and conflict; racist behavior; voting attitudes and motivation; voting and the role of the media; nationalism and political extremism.

In essence political psychologists study the foundations and outcomes of political behavior using cognitive and social explanations (Wikipedia). The discipline political psychology was formally introduced during the Franco-Prussian war and the socialist revolution. Stirred by the rise of Paris Commune (Monroe, K.R.2002).

The term is used by the following writers:

- An Ethnologist Adolph Bastian in his book *Man in History*(1860)

- The philosopher Hippolyte Taine ,a founder of the Ecole Libre de Sciences Politiques, applied Bastian's theories in his works The *Origins of Contemporary France*(1828-1893) to ideas on the founding and development of the Third Republic.

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- The head of Ecole Libre de Sciences Politiques, Emile Boutmy (1835-1906) was a famous explorer of social, political and geographical concepts of national interaction. He contributed various works on political psychology such as English people; A Study of Their Political Psychology(1901) and The American People; Element of their Political Philosophy(1902)
- The contributor of crowd theory Gustavo Le Bon(1841-1931)suggested that crowd activity subdued will and polluted rational thought which resulted in uncontrollable impulses and emotions. He suggested in his works psychology of Socialism(1896) and Political psychology and Social Defense,(1910) that in the uncontrollable state of a crowd people were more vulnerable to submission and leadership, and suggested that embracing nationalism would remedy this.(Rudmin.F.W.2005)

At the turn of the century Oxford University introduced the discipline political psychology offering courses on the "Sciences of Man. in 1901. The Oxford historian G.B.Grundy noted political psychology as a sub-discipline of history. He intended the science to instrument the clarification of mistaken beliefs about others intentions based on mistaken beliefs about ourselves. The intellectual Graham Wallas (1859-1932) implicated the significance of studying psychology in politics in Human nature in politics. Wallace stated the importance of enlightening politicians and the public to unconscious psychological process to help to guard oneself against exploitation and to control ones own psychological processes intellectually. He suggested in *The Great Society* (1917) that recognition of such processes could help to build a more functional humanity.

The first American to be considered a political psychologist was Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) whose research was also spurred by a sociological fascination of World War 1.His work Propaganda Technique in the World War (1927) implicated the use of applying psychological theories in order to enhance propaganda technique.(Van Ginneken,J.1988.P.19)

Another contributing factor to the development of Political Psychology was the introduction of psychometrics and "The Measurement of Attitude" by Thurstone and Chave (1929). The methodological revolution in social science gave quantitative grounds and therefore more credibility to Political Psychology. The 1940s election in America drew a lot of attention being at the start of World War II.Gallup, Roper and Crossley instigated research into the chances of Roosevelt being re-elected.

Lazersfeld, Berelson and gaudet (1944) also conducted a famous panel study "the Peoples Choice" on the 1949s election campaign. These studies drew attention to the possibility of measuring political techniques using psychological theories. (Van.Ginneken)

A Psychoanalytical Approach

The study of personality in political psychology focuses on the effects of leadership personality on decision-making and the consequences of mass personality on leadership boundaries.

Sigmund Fraud made significant contributions to the study of personality in political psychology through his theories on the unconscious motives of behavior. Freud suggested that a leader's behavior and decision making skill were largely determined by the interaction in their personality of the ego and super ego and their control of the pleasure principle and reality.

The psychoanalytical approach has also been used extensively in psycho biographies of political leaders. Psychobiographies draw interferences from personel, social and political development, starting from childhood, to understand behavior patterns that can be implemented to predict decision-making motives and strategies.

A Trait- based Approach

Traits are personality characteristics that show to be stable ever time and in different situations creating predispositions to perceive and respond in particular ways.(Cottam,M.L.) The expert Mr. Gordon Allport realized the study of traits introducing central, secondary, cardinal and common traits. These four distinctions suggested that people demonstrate traits to varying degrees, and further that there is a difference between individual and common traits to be recognized within a society.

A Motive-based Approach

Motivation is viewed as a goal-oriented behavior driven by a need for three things; power, affiliation intimacy, and achievement. Winter and Stewart suggested that leaders high in power motivation and low in need of affiliation intimacy motivation make better presidents.

Affiliation motivated leaders alternatively tend to collaborate joint efforts than power motivation. Motivation between a leader and those whom they are ruling needs to be consistent for success. Motives have been shown to be correlated more highly with situation and time since last goal-fulfillment, rather than consistent traits. (Sears, D.O.)

Personality Assessment

The expert Adorno explained the authoritarian personality type from a psychoanalytic point of view suggesting it to be a result of highly controlled and conventional parenting. Adorno also explained that individuals with an authoritarian personality type had been stunted in terms of developing an ability to control the sexual and aggressive id impulses. This resulted in a fear of hem and thus a deployment of defense mechanism to avoid confronting them (Cottam, M.L. 2010, P.30)

Authoritarian personality types are persons described as swinging between depending on yet resenting authority. The syndrome was theorized to encompass nine characteristics, conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-intraception, superstition and stereotype, power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, sex obsession, and projectivity.

James Berber in the Presidential Character highlighted the importance of psychobiography in political personality analysis. He said that leadership personality comprised upon three dimensions; "character, world view and style.

Margaret Hermann introduced the Leader Trait Assessment (LTA) and advocated the development of the Profiler-Plus. The Profiler-plus is a computer system used to code spontaneous interview answers for seven major characteristics, need for power,cognitivecomplexity,task-interpersonal emphasis, self-cofidence,locus of control, distrust of others, and ethnocentrism. This method can profile large bodies of leadership related text whilst removing any subjective bias from content analysis. It is efficient and highly reliable. (Cottam, M.L. 2010.P.30)

The Groups Political Psychology

The group psychology is useful to understand the structutre and ability to make successful decisions of political parties. Group form and stability is based upon several variables; size, structure, the purpose that the group serves.

The small groups are more committed and there is a lower turnover rate. The large groups display greater levels of divergence and less conformity. Group performance also diminishes with size increase, due to decreased co-ordination and rfree-riding. The sixe of a political party or nation can therefore have consequential effects on their ability to co-ordinate and progress.

The application of conformity is key for understanding group influence in political behavior. Decision making within a group is largely influenced by conformity. It is theorized to occur based on two motives; normative social influence and informational social influence. A chance of conformity is influenced by several factors:

- An increase in group size but only to a certain degree at which it plateaus.
- The degree or unanimity and commitment to the group.

The degree or popularity or a political group can be influenced by its existing size and the believed unanimity and commitment by the public of the already existing members. The degree by which the group conforms as a whole can also be influenced by the degree of individuation of its members. (Cottam, L., 2010, P.74)

Group Decision- Making Process

Decision-making is an important political process. It influences the state's policy. The group decision-making is largely influenced by three rules; majority-wins rule, and first-shift rule.Decisio-making is also coerced by conformity .The implementation of successful decision-making is often enhanced by group decision-making especially if the decision is important to the group and when the group has been working together for an extend period of time.

Applied psychology theories to improve productivity of political groups include implementing 'team development' techniques and 'quality circles' and autonomy work groups.

Group Behavior during Conflict and terrorism; Political conflict is often a consequence of ethnic disparity and ethnocentrism. Group behavior during conflict often affects the actions of an individual. The individuals are more likely diffuse responsibility in group situations. These theories can be applied to situations of conflict and genocide in which individuals remove personal responsibility and therefore justify their behaviors ((Papers,, 2014)

Voting Behavior

The voting behavior includes the role of emotions, political socialization, tolerance of diversity of political views and media. In order to make inferences and predictions about behavior concerning voting decision, certain key public influences must be considered. The effect of these influences on voting behavior is best understood through theories on the formation of attitudes, beliefs, knowledge structures and the practice of information processing. The degree to which voting decision is affected by internal processing systems of political information and external influences, alters the quality of making truly democratic decisions.

Conclusion

In the light of above discussion, it is concluded that political psychology is determining factor in different political processes. It is playing key role in decision making process. The role behavioral approach can be retrieved from the political psychology of any nation, community of any state. It is changing facto in policy-making process.

It is specialized aspect of the different political groups in the society. The Political psychology of the nation can be examined through political socialization. The states can motivate the people in democratic lines, if it socializes the people's political psychology. National Integration is the viability of ant state. It can be achieved through political psychology. Political parties, leadership, media can play positive role in this regards. They can develop the political psychological behavior of the nation. They can determine the national interest for public decision making. Political psychology reflects itself in every

aspects of the political system .Unfortunately; political psychology is used as a tool to achieve negative and short term objectives from different groups throughout the world. Individuals are joining the terrorist groups to compare their own beliefs and attitudes. The goal frustration can result in aggression and that aggression can lead to frustration. Social justice based ideology can play influential role to motivate the individuals towards Nationalism and internationalism.

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