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Conceptualizing Civic-Public Culture: Explaining the Revolutionary Political Culture and Durability in Uganda

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Abstract

This conceptual paper attempts to problematize the contextual nature of revolutionary regimes' culture and durability in Africa (Uganda to be more specific). It attempts to reconceptualize political culture in response to regime change and related issues of transitioning from military rule to popular governance—for lack of a better term—that have dominated African political scholarly discourses. This has posed questions and suspicion to abstraction and advantaged concretization in unique revolutionary-like contexts. How do we align political culture with the study and analysis of revolutionary regimes? In which political culture do revolutionary regimes identify? Situated in relational sociology, this article analyzes and conceptualizes the cultural construction and reconstruction of revolutionary regimes' political culture and regime change such as that of Uganda's National Resistance Movement since 1986. It explains how political culture as a concept has been conveniently misused to explain African political systems and provides the category wherein the revolutionary political culture lies—the civic-public culture. The civic-public culture is an amalgam of Verba and Almond's civic culture and Eckstein's public culture.

Key words: revolutionary regime culture, political culture, civic-public culture, relational sociology, durability

1. Introduction

“Revolutionary presidents are rare, scarce, golden, in a few lucky countries. In certain heroic changes for national unity; development is what they are remembered for. His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni: the only revolutionary president since 1986 ...”¹ This approach to revolutionary regime consolidation has attempted to emphasize the almighty role of ideational frameworks of individual and collective action. My interest in culture in political systems invokes the motivation to understand the construction and deconstruction of revolutionary regime culture. Such culture consequently constructs the agency that works toward durability². One simplistic way to explain revolutionary durability has been the Weberian vision and charisma of the leaders—as seen in the part of a poem above—in a legal-rational environment and the consequences of militarization of politics.

The second approach is to situate most of Africa's revolutionary durability in the institutional framework. For example, as Lecours (2000, 522) emphasized, political regimes and institutions are forces that shape socio-political ordering and power dynamics. Such institutions structure and position the individual's behaviors and actions and subsequent unintended/intended consequences such as regime durability, change, or reform.

¹ This is part of a poem recited by pupils from a local primary school in the Arua district where President Museveni's National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) celebrated the Liberation Day in 2018. The poem can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_rcSYL7hwx. Last accessed on 20 December 2021. The poem begins at 4:27:40. (see also Cheeseman, 2021:94)

² Usage of the term durability, carefully connotes the grip on power for more than two decades. An adjective “extreme” is added to the term—durability—if the two-decades old revolutionary regime maintains a strong grip on power (for about two decades) after the initial revolutionary leader. This timeframe is a subjective supposition.

The third approach is to use Lachapelle, Levitsky, Way, and Casey (2020) revolutionary durability framework. They contended that the development of cohesive ruling parties and powerful and loyal security apparatuses, as well as the destruction of alternative power centers, are the necessary and sufficient conditions for durability. According to Lachapelle *et al* revolutionary regimes emerge out of social revolutions (see also, Skocpol 1979). Such regimes possess four major features: mass-leadership and mass-support; involvement of violent power usurpation; social transformation involving the crippling of the pre-existent power centers (coercive apparatuses)—building new armies, loyal bureaucracies, and other state institutions (structures); and finally, the initiation of radical social change. This is the point of departure to the contribution of this article.

Efforts to explain revolutionary regimes' durability from a cultural dimension have been missing. Such regimes attempt to redefine civil-military relations with claims of mass-led legitimation on one hand, and the military philosophy of capture and dominion on the other. This is an intersubjective process that over time becomes very difficult to trace from general public perceptions and “so-called lived experiences³”. The realities of a revolutionary regime and its legitimation are first made possible by the historical contexts and the mass dislike of the events that precipitated the necessity for a revolution in the first place, the ingenuity of leaders of the revolutionary struggle, and then the web of interconnected relations that thereafter firmly provide a foundation for durability. While a revolutionary leader can be a symbol of the revolution, a revolutionary consolidation involves ideational approaches (including reference to the historical turmoil and sanctification of the revolutionary ethos) which cement the virtues and norms of the revolution and sets taboos on non-compliance. The process of embedding revolutionary ideology requires the recruitment of trust networks that entangle a cultural web of impunity (corruption/patrimonialism). Also, a recourse to co-optation and/or destruction of emerging opposition and deployment or instrumental use of identity conflicts (based on religions and tribes) seemingly add to the mechanism of revolutionary regime survival (Karusigarira, 2020).

Durability, however, becomes contested if some of the pillars such as the ideological grip, or the military engagement become compromised. Such a compromise may change the shape of the regime to absolutism/authoritarianism and sometimes the collapse.

The goal of this article is to conceptually ground the revolutionary regime consolidation in Africa by first situating such a regime in the richer context of political culture. This involves clarification of the conceptual path that political culture has taken, as well as new considerations. Then, these civic-public engagements as relations of power will be situated in a cultural space. Beyond democratization, authoritarianism, and hybrid regimes, this cultural inclusion offers an alternative to the understanding of complicated regime dynamics in most African revolutionary/authoritarian regimes.

This paper is structured into six sections: Section one introduced the idea to be analyzed. Section two highlights the argument, the research questions, and methodological issues. Section three explains what the revolutionary regime entails. Section four revisits political culture as a conceptual framework. Section five presents the findings concerning the civic-public culture. The sixth section concludes.

2. The Argument, questions, and methodological concerns

This is a conceptual article that explains revolutionary regime survival in post-independence Africa. A reference to Uganda's revolutionary regime—the National Resistance Movement (NRM/A)—that assumed power in 1986 and has kept its grip to date can be made. However, the analysis fits neatly in the contexts such as that of post-war Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Algeria, and other countries on the continent with related characteristics.

This article attempts to explain that the cultural dynamics as explanatory mechanisms of regime consolidation can be best understood within a civic-public cultural form of political culture. The most important feature is that aspects of state and government operations such as electoral processes, decentralization and centralization, freedoms, rights, and rule of law may depend directly or indirectly on the revolutionary politico-cultural configurations yet understudied.

³Lived experience, here, is a combination of instrumental and cultural processes that manifest in individual's representations. Experiences in revolutionary-based politically-sensitive environments are representations of a revolutionary-constructed world.

These revolutionary regime dynamics instigate a wave of pressure aimed at the re-conceptualization of culture in politics. Among different forms of political culture such as civic culture, public culture, and popular culture, there are compelling explanatory points for the introduction of civic-public culture in the political processes in some African revolutionary-based regimes such as Uganda, (and Rwanda). *Civic-public culture* involves the shared beliefs constitutive of at least two processes. The first process is the history-context strategic instrumentalization in the making of a revolutionary hegemony. In this process a wide range of principles, rules of civil practices, and military engagement is present. This is a process of cultural incubation that involves instrumental and constructive projects of political (revolutionary) elites and the *omuntu w'awansi* (literally translated as a person at the base of the political pyramid) whose disgust over historic turmoil and dictatorships is at its volcanic apex.

The second category is a process involving established regime sustenance (reproduction). The *culturalization* process in this phase involves aspects of emergent taken-for-granted outcomes of the regime's routine socialization leading to reinforcement of instrumental values and rituals established in the first revolutionary phase.

These mechanisms can be explained by the deployment of historic turmoil (memory of war), manipulative revolutionary ideology, deployment of patrimonial-based state corruption and trust networks as well as retrospective outcomes of protests as a legitimation of the status quo (Karusigarira, 2020).

The article emphasizes that the civic-public culture is a construct and an analytic position that amalgamates instrumental politics, the infectious notion of socialization in a society of strict rules of normal practice, as well as a network of protection rackets powered by systemic exclusionary state operations for the control of the public space. Yet, allowing for the civic engagements to portray a sense of political competition for power. These revolutionary mechanisms are mutually inclusive and re-enforce and interweave very conveniently. Culture, here, presents itself as the ends yet as the means in the meaning construction of political action of individuals either in unconventional politics, for example, protests, or in perceived conventional politics such as "electoral democracies".

There are some crucial questions to be asked: How do we align political culture with the study and analysis of revolutionary regimes? In which political culture do revolutionary regimes identify? These questions attract a relational methodological approach associated with Harrison White (2008, 1970). Based on the doctoral studies I conducted between 2015 and 2020 on revolutionary regimes, the historical content analysis (such as books, journals, and periodicals), online documentaries and media content, and autoethnographic encounters with the revolutionary environment were employed. There was some reluctance in the attempt to incorporate the views of the research subjects as this is the basis for the argument against civic participation as a yardstick for political culture in very sensitive revolutionary settings.

3. The revolutionary regimes⁴

Whilst this article may not overly interest itself with the background theorization of revolutions, a brief highlight of the literature on revolutions and the understanding of the mechanisms informing the revolutionary regimes' creation and retention of political power are needed. Knowledge of these mechanisms gives the scholars of mobilization for collective action as well as those interested in the maintenance of status quo leverage over the boundary between the extent of agency's influence and the power of the taken-for-granted properties of political life. This analysis is quite distinctive because it separates the revolutionary regimes that principally emphasize(d) the cause for which they hypothetically exist(ed), from other political regimes.

There have been scores of literature on the revolutionary regimes but the most remarkable originate from Paine's (1776) *Common Sense*. In a pamphlet published anonymously, Paine elaborated on the arguments for the colonies occupied by oppressors to fight for egalitarian regimes—those that guaranteed equality. At the time of *Common Sense*, American colonies' discussion of independence was treasonous although there had already been flares of hostilities between Great Britain and the colonies. This pamphlet is considered to have inspired American Independence that was attained later in July 1776, and later, influenced the famous French Revolution of 1789 against the French Monarchy's oppressive status quo leading to the untimely end of Louis xiv's reign.

⁴ Based on the doctoral research I conducted between 2015 and 2020 on revolutionary survival in Uganda submitted to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Accessed here [info:doi/10.15026/106457](https://doi.org/10.15026/106457)

After the 1789 French revolution, decades characterized by revolutions and rebellions not only in France but also elsewhere in the world followed. Because a lot of scholars have engaged in the field of revolutionary regimes, it is only fair that a short discussion of the concept is done.

A revolution according to Huntington (1968, 264-74) is a tenet of civilization that is a way of modernizing or transitioning societies. In particular, he adds that the revolution is likely to occur in societies where political development is lagging behind economic and social development and is a result of the rapid socio-economic change. Yet, Tilly (1973) in his *revolutions and collective violence* explains fervently that the immediate causal factor in the making of revolutions is the inconsistency between the regime's expectations and the demands arising from these expectations (claims). The two scholars—though with divergent views on revolutions—asked us to reconsider the struggles (claim-making) between the economic, political, and social power holders, and those to whom this power is exercised. Five years after Charles Tilly's work, Theda Skocpol introduced the social revolution. For Skocpol (1979, 13), the social revolution is not only an effort of transitions and mechanisms of change within the nation-state but rather involves international efforts. Therefore, countries positioned in a very disadvantaged international environment experienced social revolutions such as France, China, and Russia. The realities of the parochial military and its reliance on regimes have critically retarded the courses of social revolutions (Skocpol, 1979, 23).

All states considered modern in Skocpol's (1979,19) view must be seen to be closely associated with their "causes and achievements concerning internationally positioned capitalistic economic architecture and the nation-state formation". Revolutionary crises develop when the old regime starts to become unable to meet the challenges of evolving international conditions. Skocpol published this work in the same year that Tanzanian forces advanced to Uganda supplementing Ugandan insurrectionists leading to the end of Idi Amin's tyranny. However, although the Tanzanian forces managed to topple Idi Amin, the results of the rebellion remained far-fetched.

For Ugandans, the succession (the over-turn) pointed to the old regime of Milton Obote. The election of Milton Obote in 1980 did not represent the social change the country envisaged. Indeed, from 1981 to 1986, Museveni and the team embarked on a complete turn of events that would fundamentally change the nation "beyond a mere change of guards"⁵. Although there were scores of revolutions since colonization, decolonization, and post-independence in Uganda, the NRM/A has presented itself as the only authentic revolutionary regime. NRM/A does not cite the existence of international support although some conspiracy theories point to Mozambique and Libya as having been major supporters of the guerrilla revolutionary struggle. For Mozambique, Museveni had earlier fought in the Mozambican Liberation Front and already had contacts. For Libya, Muammar Gaddafi's support to the NRM/A would give Libya a stronger influence in Central and East Africa.

Later comparative historian Pincus (2007, 401) suggested that revolutions do not pit modernizers against defenders of an old regime. Rather, revolutions happen when the political nation is convinced that there is a need for political modernization, "but there are profound disagreements on the proper course of state innovation". To Pincus, state modernization is a necessary prerequisite for a revolution to occur. The extent and nature of modernizing social movements may help to shape the nature of the revolutionary regime, but they may not spark a revolution unless state modernization is already in progress.

Revolutionary regimes as Levitsky and Way (2013) define them, are regimes that emerge out of an ideology and violent struggle from below that relies on mass mobilization of people to change the existing socio-political order and its institutional structures. This definition side-lines obvious coups. The typical examples of revolutions involve the guerrilla wars, such as that of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, the violent civil wars in France (which dismantled the Bourbon Monarchy), and Russia (which dismantled the Tsarist Autocracy and led to the rise of Soviet Union) in 1789 and 1917 respectively. In the case of Uganda, 1986 was a typical revolutionary year.

Sometimes we are prompted to imagine that the revolutionary regime is the transitional period after the war victory. In such a supposition, Uganda's revolutionary regime period would be between the victory year (1986) and the enactment of constitutional rule in 1995. This would subsequently treat the period that followed 1995 as a post-revolutionary period. This is certainly problematic.

⁵ President Museveni upon revolutionary victory said "this is not a mere change of guards; it is a fundamental change". This phrase can be cited by any person that has grown up in Uganda since 1986 because it gave a new hope for a politic that the nation was yet to achieve.

The revolutionary regime in this paper is a continuous period from the period of war (a period when the NRM/A insurgents claimed the part of the sovereign state in the areas of their operations) to complete capture of the state sovereignty to present. Until a successful change from other sources of power (such as opposition political parties) takes place, our analysis remains within the revolutionary framework. When asked to define and explain the usage of the term regime in this context, the same question of boundaries regarding the term remains faint.

For some analysts (practicing politics and in academics), the regime that followed the 1986 war victory, was and still is the NRM regime. For others, the regimes have changed since 1986. These argue that the first regime was the military transition from 1986 up until 1995. From 1995 a constitutional regime emerged and has been in place since. Yet other analysts (especially NRM enthusiasts) perceive that the shift from a single-party system (Movement Political System) transformed governance and, therefore, stands on its own as a regime. The return to multi-party politics in 2005 presents its unique character that does not deserve wrapping up with other political systems. However, such trajectories (from the military regime to one-party system to multi-party system) can be characterized as reforms, transformations, reincarnations but far from the conceptual change. Change, here, means a shift in power centers from the mainstream power holders to side-line others. So as long as NRM or Museveni (or both) are still in power, there is no change. The regime is a synonym for *musevenism*. Most important to note is the fact that in its categorization, Uganda since independence presents a system where, the regime, state, government, and the person of the president are inseparable⁶ and mostly used interchangeably. Because the institutional framework in Uganda is characterized by individual personification, the ideal conditions for conceptualization of revolutionary regimes, states, and government such as those in *musevenism* could remain problematic devoid of the analysis involving the structuring of the presidency.

4. Revisiting political culture as a conceptual framework

Interestingly, the most crucial concept—political culture—used by social scientists is vaguely referenced without commitment to understanding its existence and context. The attractiveness of the concept “political culture” has not only become ambiguous but is also quite often used as a residual factor⁷ and sometimes its usage is avoided⁸.

According to Street (1994), political culture has been treated as a familiar piece of furniture. The discussions on the term, in part, help the readers to understand the dos and don'ts of its usage, political systems, and (now) what I call *civic-public culture*. Let us go by Pateman's (1971) and Barry's (1978) interpretation of political culture as a composition of expectations originating from common experiences of the political system in question in a structural-functionalist lens of sociological approach. Within this definition lies the fact that Almond and Verba's (1963) *civic culture* does not exist by magic.

Political culture came to the limelight with Almond and Verba (1963) in their work *Civic Culture*. They, however, seemingly intentionally implied that *civic culture* and political culture can be synonymous terms (see also Eckstein, 1992, 104). They were struggling to distinguish political culture from *civic culture* and the political system. The behaviorist-influenced *civic culture* is wrong to assume that the attitudes held by people were enough to characterize political systems (Street, 1994). Rather, political culture constitutes complex collective feelings and images drawn from all forms of socialization with some conflicting yet others convivially complementary. Almond and Verba posited that the structure (to mean the political system) and the culture (to mean civic engagement) are a one-size-fits-all. Yet, the structure and culture reinforce each other in their separate existences and depend on each other to remain relevant. Much as they form from different processes, they are not mutually exclusive. To make clarity of what *civic culture* is; it is one of the analytical categories of the political culture in a political system.

Almond and Verba tried to imply that culture is an independent variable that accounts for people's responsiveness to their political systems such as democracy or authoritarianism. But while examining the peoples' attitudes towards their political systems, they overshadowed the processes that lead to those attitudes, which have greater explanatory power.

⁶ NTV Uganda on “presidential debate”. Published January 15 2016.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBUJ5nrvxvs/> Last accessed March 10, 2019>

⁷ Kavanagh (1972) in his work on *political culture*, page 55.

⁸ Fred Greenstein's deliberate avoidance of the term political culture in his work, *personality and politics* (1987), page ix.

It is against this backdrop that the famed (and highly referenced) *civic culture* does not account in full, for the context in which the revolutionary regime operates in Uganda. Nevertheless, they provided an analytical base for scholars starting to include cultural theories in political sociology. Almond and Verba, therefore, attempted to elucidate the political culture as a civic form. In this study, they attempted to examine the citizen's perception of their studied country cases' political systems. It does not look like they had the governments in their analytical scope. They defined *civic culture* as "transmitted through a complex socialization process" that includes training in many social institutions—family, peer group, school, and workplace—, but gave little attention to the political system itself" from which a major aspect of political power is clustered.

They made a classification of political systems based on the nature of citizens' overall perceptions of their political governance. One of such classifications was the *participant culture* in which most people revealed a high level of pride towards their political system. The other characterization was the *subject culture* whereby the citizens discount their ability to participate in and make changes to their political system but rather they consider themselves as the obedient subjects. The other characterization was the *parochial culture* where the citizens concentrate on their local issues and give little or no attention to the national-level issues. People in a *parochial culture* tend to speak less or nothing about their political establishments because, in their understanding, such political issues do not necessarily affect their lives (even though such political issues usually affect them entirely).

The findings of the *civic culture* research present an intentional emphasis on activation of activism in countries that lacked *participatory culture* such as the *subject* and the *parochial* cultures. At the back of Almond and Verba's minds, is an evident emphasis on *participatory culture* as the desired yardstick for an ideal political culture. *Civic culture* promoted by the duo assumed a rationality-activist model of democratic regime consolidation. The first challenge with such an assumption is that Almond and Verba omitted the fact that sometimes the people may not be very rational in particular circumstances. A complete acceptance of *civic culture* as a working formula of political culture omits a very significant part that underpins this analysis. Civil society is not a player in a one-sided game. Whereas there are such concepts as participatory, subject, or parochial culture, political conditions are enabled by a process in a public space (a space occupied in part by civic cultural claims). The second challenge caveating my full immersion into the *civic culture* as a theoretical formula is that the brains behind its construction (Almond and Verba) aimed to overcome the democratic fragility yet in countries such as Uganda and Rwanda under revolutionary regimes, people in the public space have a shared controlled political opinion indicating that the system is democratic while not.

Lichterman (2012, 213) reinvented the concept of civic culture to mean the cultural patterns that shape the means or ends of civic action. Any form of collective effort to solve a community problem amounts to civic culture. He argued that civic culture is a set of publicly shared representations of what makes a worthwhile problem and good solution, a good act, person, or society. This can be seen through moral vocabularies, cultural codes, and drama.

In short, Lichterman's interpretation of civic culture implies cultural forms that people use in particular sites—real, contextual, or virtual—to solve a community problem. This pragmatic line of inquiry that seeks to explain cultural causalities and outcomes is problematic. It seems that people become collective to solve problems. Also, such collectiveness intended to solve a problem can be a problem itself requiring some controls in the public spheres, for example, the state perception of civil rights protests as a threat to stability.

Civic culture has also garnered attention from debates over the influence of mass media (and most importantly in recent years social media) on political action. Here as Thompson (1990) puts it, mass media encompasses a process in which symbolic goods are produced and then transmitted. Thompson attempts to signal the view that ideas do not exist in a sealed compartment, but are rather intimately bound and meanings attached by their relationship with other pervasive events of everyday life. I, however, urge that although culture is perhaps produced from ideas, its reproduction may be detached from the ideas of its formative evolution. Political culture, therefore, is prone to constant change as the mass media hastens its grip of influence.

However, rather than instigate a dependent-independent variable inference, interest in the mechanisms leading to the conduciveness of the relationship within variables could yield stronger explanatory power. The mechanisms in this situation are not devoid of socio-economic, cultural, military, and political factors inherently present in a revolutionary political system.

As Street (1994, 101) explained, *Civic Culture* may be rather characterized to be an outcome rather than a cause as Almond and Verba would love us to think. They were also left to grapple with collective decision rule advanced by Eckstein (1992, 299). Almond and Verba did not classify interview outcomes from the elite vs agrarians, urbanites vs rural subjects which left hanging the process leading to wider agreements on political perceptions and attitudes. The collective, according to Eckstein, could be an assortment of subgroups whose position is common in agreement or disagreement with the given ordering of politics of which a slight change in expectations affects the findings.

While attempting to explain how political culture can be analyzed, Lichbach (2003) categorized culturalists into two broader frameworks i.e., subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. He introduced the subjective culturalist approach considered a close cousin of rational choice, as a study of culture involving cognition and motivation leading to action (see also Inglehart, 1977; Barnes, Kaase, and associates, 1979, and Almond and Verba, 1963; 1980). Geertz (1973) argues on the contrary to this subjective notion that because different behaviors may lie behind the same action, meaning must be interpreted to understand such action. Geertz claims (in Ricoeur 1986, 257) that understanding the pairing of what we see, with the rules of the political rituals is necessary. Lichbach then offered inter-subjectivity as an alternative approach (with which I associate). In this approach, because humans do not behave but act, the mechanisms that connect culture to actions are not merely based on interest but rather are complex as culture itself. Between cognitions and conscience lies inter-subjective consciousness (common norms). Shared cognition involves knowledge about the past and present construction of reality, while conscience helps people to handle the everyday workings within the collective action.

However, rather than diminish the norms as neither necessary nor sufficient condition for action as Lichbach (2003, 97) asserted, it should be emphasized that the cumulative effect of action precipitates a kind of (normative) outcome in many ways different from the previous action. Lichbach's assertion lacked clarity on the unknown elements of culture located in the side-lines of collective consciousness although a highlight was made of norms being regulative and implying external control.

Yet, Robertson's (1985) definition of political culture seems to fit so neatly in Almond and Verba's *civic culture* as the totality of ideas and attitudes towards authority or government. This is one side of the coin (involving interest in the attitudes of citizens), lacking an equally meaningful opposite side (involving the restraints organized around the formation of such attitudes usually from the state apparatuses of coercion). Relatedly, Rose (1980) describes the values, beliefs, and emotions as constitutive of the culture that gives meaning to politics yet most of the time taken for granted. Within his behaviorist notion of political life, Kavanagh (1985) argued that the culture positions its members to consider certain political behaviors as acceptable while others do not. He suggested in this characterization that the political system is embedded in the political culture. Kavanagh had earlier in 1972 claimed that political culture is part of the larger culture of a society (call it a subculture).

Williams (1989) insightfully defined political culture in a much simpler yet broader sense. He argued that every society has its shape, purpose, and meaning. He added that the making of society, therefore, is through finding the meanings and directions. A society's growth is constitutive of debates and contestation involving amendment of such meanings and directions under the pressure of experience, contact, and discovery. This is a process of symbolic creativity as Willis (1990) put it. But this insinuation of culture as symbolic creativity seems to put the ideational notion in the lead. Yet what happens behind the curtains of the human brain is much bigger than intentional creativity. We ought to give equal importance to the process of embedding taken-for-granted-ness (a field in which the self is partly an alien). Perhaps, Norton's (2004) description of culture (although without the adjective *political*) could be subtly crafted to include both public and civic elements of culture although no clarity was done as an attempt to amalgamate the two sources of culture (civic and public). She treats culture as a matrix or a network of meanings, at once a linguistic and material phenomenon, and skillfully shows the mutuality of culture with politics, language, and authority.

To this effect, therefore, political culture is as old as social science disciplines. Some scholars treat political culture as subservient to material forces or systemic requirements, for example, Marxists and ideational scholars who understand ideas and strategy as wholesomely constitutive of political culture. Bureaucratic adherents are fascinated by setting up rules that govern society with impersonal and professional ties to doing things. The Durkheimians advance the normative clustering of society in a structure of values, symbols, and taboos.

The scholarship which suggests that society is made of beliefs, norms, and collective values, intimately places culture at the center of its analysis, insinuating that culture influences action rather than reductionism.

Other scholars treat political culture as an intellectual core. For instance, for society to exist and prosper, according to Alexis Tocqueville⁹ the minds of its citizens must be held together by certain predominant ideas, although ideas cannot just be accepted in equal measures by all citizens (see also Street, 1994, 67). Chomsky and Herman (1988) had theorized this part of the analysis of culture as a *propaganda model of communication* involving the manufacture of public consent of war citing the US invasion of foreign lands. Chomsky and Herman in this work illustrated that we should have a few powerful political elites and the rest of the population should spectate, and get forced to concede to their narratives. Earlier, in 1922, Lippmann had discussed the same notion of manufacture of public consent, although he used the conception to include broadly the political public relations to rally public opinion towards government policies and not just the justification for the invasion of foreign lands. Lippmann believed that the concerns of all people if not left in the domain of a small specialized political class can elude the public to unnecessary proportions and cause the disorder. In other words, in the case of Uganda, the objective reason is all we need and only the revolutionary regime has the patents.

Yet, Chase (2005) explained the embeddedness of culture in the dispute process. He emphasized that institutional practices such as those of regimes are a passage through which socio-cultural life is maintained, challenged as well as altered. Although Chase emphasized the institutions of laws, his claims expounded on not only how power influences the societal outlook and associated culture, but also how the practices are determined by the cultural heritage. Therefore, culture is so complex that anyone set of institutional practices can hardly explain it. He associated himself with Geertz (1973) who observed that man creates rules by enclosing self in a set of meaningful forms (webs of signification that he has spun¹⁰). Geertz's web is spun by man's social interaction, symbolization, epistemologies, and practices (Chase, 2005). This web that suspends man, according to Chase, comprises, in part, the regime institutions that enable or disable particular aspects of socio-political life (or consider public culture in Eckstein's conceptualization), and partly the internally held ideas and beliefs (sometimes not quantifiable) that make the universe tolerable. According to Geertz, even when the frequently odd and fragmented elements of culture are admitted, identifying meaningful symbols and clusters of such symbols would yield statements of the underlying regularities of human experience embedded in their formation¹¹ (see also Geertz 1973, 408). Chase treated culture as an immutable explanatory variable in a sense that dispute-ways reflect and, in turn, affect culture. There is, however, a problem with this kind of cultural analysis. It treats culture as either the making of man or primordially-essentially placed. They are devoid of cultural self-reinvigoration processes.

Wolf (1999) explained how social and cultural configurations intertwine with considerations of power in its nexus with ideas. From Wolf's power analysis, then, we see the meaning through culture's role in upholding one version of the story as true against other possibilities. Wolf implied that what happens in the social world, must first be made possible by the determinant power (controllers of the public spaces). Wolf was dissatisfied with the anthropologists' over-reliance on the claims that see cultural coherence as the result of cultural-linguistic logic and aesthetics rather than focus more on how power structures such logic and aesthetics in the first place. Lukes (2005 [1974]) in his work, *a radical view* in the third face of power emphasized the mechanisms of power in shaping the systems. Lukes illustrated how political elites can influence others by manipulating their preferences and interests through myth or ritual creation and dissemination (see also, Nozaki, 2009; Ross, 2009; Scott, 2005). This is a typical example in Lustick's (2006) interpretation of the spate of novels, films in the United States that reinforced the fear of terrorism as well as the need for a *war on terror* to make the country safe following the September 11 attacks or as frame-action alternatives. Rather than ideas, Harris (1979) insisted on a careful verification of the behavioral facts organized by researchers using operationalized epistemologies because the social phenomena such as power and regimes are beyond the assumptions of the "so-called natives' lived experiences".

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, on *Democracy in America*, Volume II (New York: Knopf, 1945), pp. 8.

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, in his "Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective", *Supra Note 7*, pp. 167.

¹¹ In, Jerry D. Moore (2019), in his work, *Visions of Culture: An Annotated Reader* pp. 364. quoted Clifford Geertz.

Additionally, Jessop (2004) introduced the cultural political economy in the cultural turn. He equally treated culture as an instrumental project achievable through semiosis, as well as extra-semiosis. He attempted to equally treat culture as a mere outcome of state hegemonic vision accumulated from instrumental strategies based on the knowledge economy. To Jessop (2004), culture, its evolution, ordering, reproduction, and transformation depend both on the master political discourse (usually nurtured by the power holders) as well as the emergent non-semiotic features that include an overall configuration of specific semiotic contexts and complexities of the natural and social worlds in which such semiosis occurs. He labored to steer a path between soft cultural economics with a semiotic character claiming *culturalization* of economic life common with works such as those of Lash and Urry (1994) or Williams' (1980). Jessop in his relational approach did not, however, explain whether the social world's emergent complexities pass through the same path as the instrumental semiotic discourses. The elements of natural worlds are majorly judicial notices—the natural law. Nonetheless, Jessop succeeds at explaining the constant variation in routine practices (wittingly or unwittingly) which produces radical transformations of such practices subsequently leading to either changing or stabilizing. This was a great step in the analysis of cultural turn.

Tillians, with whom I associate, on the other hand, treat the political culture as a product of causal mechanisms that cannot be reduced to merely one set of knowledge. Tilly (1978, 61) asked us to rather than extrapolate interest from the research population's utterances and actions (seen commonly as a pattern-like culture), or from a general correlation between interest and social position, we should compromise in between these two otherwise repelling processes. We, therefore, ought to treat the relations of production as determinants of the interests that people pursue on average in a long-run as well as give much attention to peoples' articulations of their interests as an explanation of their actions in the short-run (see also Krinsky and Mische, 2013, 6). Although Tilly (1994) suffered irritability with Parsonsian behavioral functionalism and total contempt of Durkheimian traditions of culture, his attention to historical patterns and processes satisfied the notion of political culture that I seek to define. The work on state formation and state transformation as analytical categories presented the notion of transactions, identity, and relations which are necessary conditions for the production and reproduction of cultural properties in a regime setting such as a revolutionary one.

Although political culture has been discussed, revolutionary regimes as cultural entities have not been incorporated to extract meaning formations both within the civic space and the public arena. Understanding revolutionary regimes entail interest in masses awakening and the mass-led actions to reduce obstacles to access to the public space necessary for civic engagements. Section five introduces civic-public culture as a form of culture that possesses the characteristics of a revolutionary regime's political culture.

5. Findings—civic-public culture as a concept

Civic-public culture is a form of political culture that is completely undiscussed in social sciences. It is a political culture that stems from the colonial legacy of European hegemonies manifested publicly with historical and contingent elements that fall within the civic interaction. Such colonial hegemonies at the time of colonization had difficulty (unwillingness) understanding the fate of politics that would follow their conquest spree in fragmented nation-states based on a range of heterogeneous pre-colonial identities. Nationalism and revolutionary movements, severe new wars (consider internal civil conflicts), population disintegrations, and nation-building strategies that followed the post-colonial African political path required that a vast majority of comparative political analysts pick interest in the redefinition of political culture. We needed to explain the legitimation and signification of new sources of power and new responses to such power by the masses. Rather than use political culture as a sum-up of all the political explanations, the dynamics in which cultural properties are configured are another better and more sophisticated way to analyze political cultures/subcultures. Given this backdrop, the unending legitimation of such new sources of political power and the citizens' unending redefinition of their political lives draws us to the processes that outline the importance of multi-dimensional cultural analysis of revolutionary post-colonial regimes in Africa.

This form of political culture plays a very important explanatory role in one, the way it shapes and constitutes political actions, and two, (perhaps most importantly) the construction (including the taken-for-granted) just beyond instrumental aspects of culture itself.

This characterization can be possible if we give equal treatment to political socialization commonly derived from the sources of state power (usually considered elitist through state apparatuses), the other socializations (such as familial, communal, or generational informal socialization usually considered as *irrational periphery*)¹² and the conditions necessary and sufficient for these socializations.

When the peoples' recollections and orientations of their past and present are in a serious contestation with the political system in which they are clustered, socialization receives new elements within which to operate. In the likely event that the orientations to the past and present of societal membership is disintegrated, Eckstein's (1992) political socialization seen as the regime's narrative of public opinion may displace all other forms of socialization to invent new routines in which all members must cluster and invert the contradicting historical truth or fiction. In this kind of political culture, the civic element (associated with Verba and Almond (1963)) may be muted for the time being (whether forcibly or otherwise). This restricted political culture can also be referred to as the *public culture* commonly associated with Eckstein (1992), but one that is (if at all) discussed faintly and quite vaguely to mean public space, or public appearance, or control.

Understanding conformity to a revolutionary *civic-public culture* for both the crafters and the followers requires steps to address cultural integration. Rather than espouse Levi Strauss' "surplus of signifiers" (or excess) dilemma, we are reminded of a need to parsimoniously select and reduce the range of cultural relevance to a much narrower and smaller set of referents¹³ (see also Wiseman, 2007, 56). The revolutionary political systems aspire for mass integration in their collective beliefs. The citizens for example do not have to share the regime's ideology but open criticism may perhaps win an instant reprisal. There are reports in Communist China, where just using a social media platform such as *WhatsApp* (perceived to distort the national narrative) is a total prohibition. In Rwanda, although it is intrinsically impossible that all citizens support Kagame's nationalization/*de-ethnicization* project, the channels through which free expression of the alternative views are opaquely closed. Questioning Kagame's national cultural integration amounts to a charge related to genocide perpetration that attracts imprisonment amounting to a death sentence. Similarly, in Uganda, any king or traditional ruler who openly opposes *musevenism* may risk severe reprisal from the regime (the kingdom establishments understand this condition perfectly). So, in this complex environment, we may find presumed materiality and immateriality, that both complement the construction and resilience of political symbolization.

Civic-public culture is a result of the collection of elements fragmented in different forms of political culture such as civic and public. The studies on culture in political and historical sociology have at least associated with culture in terms of public or civic in their independent capacities. Whereas culture is about shared norms and values, political culture does not necessarily mean that people fundamentally agree with all aspects of political order and understand it in equal terms. Luehmann (2007) reminds us that experiences or representations are not equal to the ability to nurture identity development (see also Avraamidou, 2016, 22). The people are rather likely to share a common view about their public environment including their political leaders, structures, and the sustained symbols and values of public life (Green and Luehmann, 2007, 198). Green and Luehmann posited that public culture entails citizens' general feelings towards governance including their desire (as well as lack of it) to participate in political issues. The concept of political culture inspires a recognition of the long-term impact of socio-economic and historical circumstances. The challenge arises though when we start by associating culture to the "general feeling toward government" (common with Civic cultural adherents) and avoiding the history, contingency, and regimes' actors' perception on the shaping of the environment susceptible to the public's rational/irrational scrutiny and *vice-versa* (if indeed, ideational scholarship deserves a page of academic space).

It is, therefore, a convenient attempt to clarify the kind of political culture we are referring to. In this study, the lucidity arising from the convergences between the public and civic culture is core. It generates a new concept of the *Civic-Public Culture* in the political-cultural and sociological studies that relational scholars, as well as other analytical lenses, may find beneficial. Treating the two strands of knowledge—the civic and public—as a compound of a bi-dimensional cultural process, support Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky's 1990 work.

¹² Irrational periphery as figuratively used by many elites with whom I spent time sharing informal discussions, implies the willing voters that lack alternative course of action.

¹³ More elaborate in Eric Wolf's (1989) *Distinguished Lecture at 88th Annual Meeting of American Anthropological Association, on Facing Power-Old Insights New Questions*. Page. 592.

The *civic-public culture* explains the relationship between the center and the periphery as self-reinforcing and how different individuals internalize rival ways of collective political life to generate a revolutionary consensus on power.

Finally, the cultural analysis in this paper is not necessarily a derivative of the “primordial ethos” but rather the carefully framed and constructed belief systems that run wild through the state institutions and set the pace of the political agenda. It may start with the instrumentalist strategic alignment but gain self-reinforcement through the power of coercion and forcible enforcement, as well as through ideological processes resulting from the regime narratives, the invisible arm of patriarchy-based corruption, and the legitimation *post-hoc* effects of systemic protests (Karusigarira, 2020). The agency-inspired political institutions (such as regimes and states) may reconstruct, revive and regenerate such agendas into lasting political folklores and rituals that sink deep into the wider membership of the nation-states. Such a cultural process is reinvigorated by the existence of opposing forces that appear to be a threat to politically-defined well-being yet legitimating the revolutionaries whose regime is ideologically grounded as “clean and acceptable”. The renewed political contestations in revolutionary Uganda, have bled an interwoven history and emotions of wars that continue to construct actions of agency in the revitalization of political power. Similar cases of revolutionary culture have existed (or still exist) in Uganda, Rwanda, Congo, Burundi, South Sudan, and South Africa among others, but sufficient analysis seems to remain scanty.

6. Conclusion

The fusion of ideational explanatory framework with the cultural properties (including the taken-for-granted embedded revolutionary sub-cultures that make personalities and structures more re-enforced) could inspire some academic ingenuity. The inclusion of a web of intersubjectivities in the analysis of civic and public spaces introduces newer nuances to explanations of the revolutionary regime’s durability. The alternative description of revolutionary regimes as both “social-cultural beings” and rational/ideational spaces, shifts the attention from the dominant democratization and authoritarian discourses of knowledge on Africa.

The concept “civic-public culture”—analyzed here—can effectively explain limited civic participation in not only the revolutionary settings but also political systems associated with quasi-democracy and absolutism in Africa. What we do in our everyday lives is partly inhibited by the socio-political environments wherein we live and interact. This, somewhat, limits what we know and represent about our social realities. With this conceptual analysis, we can visualize the shrinking civic space in electoral political mechanisms of Africa’s revolutionaries and other authoritarian contexts. On the flip side of the coin, however, lies the possibilities of recourse to the very mass violence that precipitated the revolutionary turn if ideological bonds can no longer hold the revolutionary military philosophy.

As part of decolonizing literature, the significance of the study relates to the explanatory unsuitability of some typologies of western-oriented political cultures in parts of Africa. For example, the civic culture requires some redefinitions to apply to most of Africa. Similarly, Ekstein’s public culture requires the understanding of who controls the public space in which civic interactions take place. Scholars interested in African politics, political culture, and revolutionary politics may have an interest in this content.

Finally, this research is part of the “move to the middle” methodological strands and, therefore, suffers directly or indirectly from similar ambiguities. These ambiguities stem from the attempts to disregard the omnipotence of agency yet be skeptical of a total culturalist dimension. Situated in relational studies, it is a contribution to constantly unresolved questions about the description of political systems in Africa. The paper does not offer not only the inciteful threshold for what durability or consolidation means but also cannot explain the distinction between revolutionary regime culture and authoritarian regime culture as they may both possess the same cultural qualities or at least purport to have of such qualities.

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