

Contemporary Political Ideologies

**edited by
Roger Eatwell
and Anthony Wright**

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Preface

In everyday usage, 'ideology' tends to be a pejorative term, synonymous with the dogmatic or fanatical. This is *not* the sense in which the term is used in this book. Nor does this book adopt the instrumental approach to ideology, common among social scientists and Marxists, which sees ideology as socially 'determined', rather than as a body of relatively coherent and comprehensive beliefs, of interest in their own right.

It is this last feature of ideologies which this book focuses on – namely ideologies' key assumptions and themes, their intrinsic content. This is not to deny that there are interesting questions to be asked about the social origins and role of ideologies. However, these questions would require a separate book to do them justice. Moreover, we live in an age of 'hyper-change'. Suddenly, in the last decade or so, the ideologies which were in the ascendant in the early twentieth century seem to have entered terminal decline, whilst other ideologies have been rejuvenated, and newer ones have grown in force. In general, these changes have undermined the left more than the right, though the rise of new ideologies throughout the twentieth century has helped show the weaknesses classifying ideologies by the traditional left-right spectrum.¹

Therefore, the emphasis here is on specific 'real' ideologies – a reflection of our belief that ideas are worthy of serious study, both in their own right, and as major motive forces in history. We offer here a series of chapters by leading experts on the ideologies which have shaped the twentieth century. We have sought to avoid polemics, asking contributors to provide as clear and objective a survey as possible, though without trivializing arguments, or avoiding controversial and original interpretations. The result, we believe, is a book which will appeal both to the more expert reader, and to students in higher education who seek an introduction to modern ideologies, but who want something more than a basic survey.

Most commentators date the beginnings of modern ideology from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its attack on the previously dominant forces of autocratic monarchism and religion. We have, therefore, asked contributors to offer, where appropriate, brief overviews of developments before 1900 in order to help underline both the origins of ideologies, and how they have adapted their main tenets over time. However, the main focus of the book is on the twentieth century. This means that contributors have more space both to set out the modern ambiguities and variants of each ideology, and to assess its importance on the eve of the twenty-first century.

The exact choice of ideologies was a matter of some concern. In particular, we debated whether the book should focus mainly on Western ideas, or should its purview be more universal? We wanted to avoid a parochial approach, where chapters could focus on one or a small number of countries. We live in revolutionary times, and past revolutions have shown all too clearly that their motivating ideas take on an international force. However, we decided against a significant element of non-Western coverage for two reasons. First, it would make it difficult in a single work to cover anything in reasonable depth. Second, an ideology needs to be understood within a specific context (this is not to say that an ideology is socially 'determined'). There is some danger in all the following chapters of ideas being separated from concrete political situations. We have assumed, perhaps optimistically, that most readers have some familiarity with the outlines of twentieth-century Western history. In order to discuss ideologies which have been more characteristic of the Third World, we would have had to ask contributors to add considerable amounts of historical contextual material. This would have made the format of the book non-uniform, for we see this book essentially as a study of comparative *political ideas* rather than history, sociology, or public policy – though we very much believe that it will interest those concerned primarily with these issues.

The bulk of the book therefore consists of specific chapters on what we see as the key twentieth-century ideologies: liberalism; conservatism; social democracy and democratic socialism; Marxism and communism; anarchism; nationalism; fascism; feminism; and ecologism. These are preceded by an opening chapter discussing approaches to, and trends in ideology. This raises a variety of methodological issues which could be missed if attention had simply been paid to 'substantive' ideologies.

We hope that the structure of both the book and each chapter is clear. In particular each chapter (a) is divided into important sub-sections; (b) has several box-displayed quotes from primary sources at the beginning of some sub-sections, or in the text, to highlight key points; (c) uses endnotes to underline important works and, to a lesser extent, to point to tangential works (as below); (d) gives the dates of key theorists and personalities when they are first mentioned; and (e) has an extensive 'Guide to further reading'.

As we have also provided a very full index, we have dispensed with the usual editorial introductory overview. Instead, we limit ourselves to

the observation that most of the chapters which follow indicate that ideology is far from dead. To adopt the catchy phrase of Francis Fukuyama, we are a long way from witnessing the 'end of history', namely the triumph of liberal democratic and capitalist values.

All that remains is for us to express the usual thanks. We are particularly grateful to the contributors for accepting editorial suggestions, and providing such excellent chapters. RE is grateful for comments on his chapters to: George Eatwell, Sheelagh Ellwood, Joe Femia, Roger Griffin, Ewan Harrison, Ian Kershaw, Brian Neve, Michael Pinnock, Mark Sinclair, Diethelm Prowe, and Mario Sznajder. Finally, but by no means least, we are grateful to Iain Stevenson, Nicola Viinikka, and Alec McAulay for being the perfect publishers.

*Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright
Bath and Birmingham, October 1992.*

Note

1. This book makes no effort to discuss the left-right spectrum in a systematic way, though some chapters refer to the problems of this simple classification. For an introduction to these problems see Part one of R. Eatwell and N. O'Sullivan (eds), *The Nature of the Right*, Pinter, London, 1989.

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1 Ideologies: Approaches and Trends

Roger Eatwell

Some readers will pick up this book in order to study just one chapter. A student might seek help to write an essay on a particular 'ism' (is the 'New Right' a form of conservatism or liberalism?; what have been the main strands of Marxism?). An academic might be interested in detailed points of interpretation, or on the exact focus of the specialist contributors (how can the chapter on fascism play down organization and style?; how can the chapter on ecologism largely ignore the programme of green movements and parties?). Probably this will be the least-read chapter, as many shy away from methodology, or the more sweeping arguments.

However, there are important general problems involved in studying 'ideology' which need facing at the outset. Indeed, one leading commentator, David McLellan, has written that: 'Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science'.¹ Among the most problematic issues are:

- a) Should ideologies be studied in terms of their *social function*? For example, are ideologies a set of rationalizations, reflecting dominant elite values, or the interests of insurgent groups, such as the working class?
- b) Should ideologies be analysed more in terms of their *intrinsic structure*? This would involve studying features such as an ideology's key tenets, myths, contradictions, tensions, even its morality or truth.
- c) Should an *idealist* approach be adopted, which sees ideologies as a major motive force in history and life? Or should a *materialist* approach be adopted, which sees economic forces as the motor of history and consciousness?

These questions cannot be fully resolved in the space of a single chapter, but section 1 seeks both to offer an outline of the main arguments about the nature of ideology, and to defend the particular approach taken in

this book. Section 2 looks more at how ideologies have developed during the twentieth century, casting light on the methodological debate in a more concrete way and setting the scene for the following chapters which look at specific ideologies, by asking:

- a) How has ideological 'fashion' changed during the twentieth century?
- b) Are we really witnessing the 'end of ideology'/'end of history'? Have liberal democracy and capitalism really won?

1: Approaches to 'ideology'

The origins of the term

The French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) coined the term '*idéologie*' in 1796. De Tracy was an aristocrat, sympathetic to the French Revolution (1789), but was imprisoned during the Terror. On release, he turned his attention to what had caused such barbarities, and the more general question of the way in which the values of epochs and societies differed significantly. De Tracy was a true, rationalistic, heir to the Enlightenment. He saw 'ideology' as a science of the human mind (as biology and zoology are sciences of species). Moreover, like many other members of the Institut National, which had replaced the royal academies after the Revolution, de Tracy believed his task was not simply explanatory. He wanted to improve people – to show which ideas were false, and to develop a system of education which could produce better people (the nineteenth century was to see a great extension in public education in the West).

This association of 'ideology' with science was short lived. Indeed, the word 'ideology' quickly degenerated into a pejorative term, referring more to the object rather than the form of study – a situation which largely remains today. Thus, 'we' exhibit common sense, or pragmatism; 'we' are informed more by education, or carefully considered philosophies. Opponents have dangerous 'ideologies'.

The first major figure to use the term in this pejorative way was Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821). Napoleon had initially been sympathetic to de Tracy's work. However, after becoming emperor, he caricatured de Tracy's group as 'ideologues'. (He was influenced both by his desire to seek the support of traditional groups, notably the Catholic Church, and a growing realization that emotive and symbolic forms of politics could help underpin his dictatorial rule.) Napoleon thus began a long line of critics who were to associate 'ideology' with traits such as simplistic analysis, divorced from reality, and/or an authoritarian desire to improve people's lives.

Marxist approaches to 'ideology'

Ideology as a pejorative concept was particularly important in the work of Karl Marx (1818–83). Indeed, a notable political philosopher, John Plamenatz, has written that it was Marx 'more than anyone, who introduced the word into social and political theory, and he used it in all its important senses without troubling to make clear how they differ'.² Subsequently, Marxist approaches have dominated the *methodological* debates about 'ideology'.

Arguably the best known Marxist statement on ideology appears in *The German Ideology*, which Marx wrote with Friedrich Engels (1820–95) in the 1840s:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.³

Marx was critical of those who held that the role of ideas was crucial in history and in social life. He believed that social existence determined consciousness, and not the other way round. He thus adopted a materialist view of history, in which economic forces rather than great leaders or ideas led to 'progress'. Marx made a distinction in capitalist society between a 'base' and 'superstructure'. The former referred to the basic organization of the means of production, and the resulting class system. The superstructure referred more to individuals, to ideologies. These ideologies were not simply 'isms', but were reflected in any feature of society which served to defend the ruling class. Thus ideologies were the 'legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic' principles which reinforced capitalist society.⁴

Marx did not believe that his own views were 'ideology', seeing them as based on a scientific understanding of history and the inevitable triumph of the working class and socialism. However, it was Engels who sought to popularize the term 'scientific socialism' for Marx's work. It was also Engels who dismissed 'ideology' as 'false consciousness', a phrase not used by Marx, though it subsequently became central to Marxist work.⁵ False consciousness refers to socially or time-bound views, which help support a particular system. A good example of this would be the belief that the liberal democratic state is 'neutral': in other words, holding that individuals and groups have equality before the law; that the civil service does not pursue class-interest; and so on. For Marx and Engels, the law was ultimately a defence of capitalism and property, as were other key features of the liberal democratic state.

Marx was not the first to notice that groups tend to have systems of outlooks, which can be more implicit than explicit. Nor was he the first

to stress that these views limit both the questions which can be asked, and the answers reached. Marx was especially indebted here to the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) (although in other ways his work was a critique of Hegel). However, it was Marx who first attributed the term 'ideology' to such belief systems, though as with much of Marx, there was some notable variation in his usage. In particular, there was a tension between the pejorative sense of ideology as something which masked the interests of capitalist society, and a more general sense in which ideologies were seen as a necessary part of the belief systems of all societies.

V.I. Lenin (1870–1924) too identified Marxism as a science, but he effectively accepted that ideology was a term which should not be restricted to capitalist, or pre-capitalist, society (the 'revisionist' Marxist Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) had shortly before also associated socialism with ideology). In *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) Lenin argued for a socialist ideology which could help develop working class consciousness beyond the 'economism' of immediate concerns (though this was secondary to his emphasis on revolutionary organization). Lenin especially believed such an ideology was important to prevent the working class from falling into trade union consciousness. He saw unions as premised on the existence of capitalism, particularly in the sense that their demands for better wages and conditions could, in the short run, best be achieved through a healthy capitalism. Moreover, unions threatened to divide the working class into a relatively well paid unionized group, and an impoverished proletariat, lacking the leadership of those who had been attracted by unions. In Lenin's words:

All those who talk about 'overrating the importance of ideology', about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself . . . But this is a profound mistake . . . Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the *only* choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology.⁶

This socialist ideology was largely to be developed by an intelligentsia, which clearly must have broken free from the power of capitalist conditioning. Exactly where this left the materialist conception of history, and especially the primacy of base over superstructure, was never made fully clear. However, it reflected a challenge to those Marxists who sought to delineate rigid materialist laws of history.

This development was taken even further in the works of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Gramsci rejected the cruder forms of materialism which reduced the 'superstructure' to 'base' factors. In his later writings he also became increasingly critical of Leninism, believing that it did not pay sufficient attention to the strength of 'civil society' in liberal democracies – namely, non-

governmental institutions and forms of social conditioning, such as education, or the mass media.

Gramsci believed that the rule of one class over another was not simply an economic one. It depended on 'hegemony' – on cultural, and ideological forces as well (the concept of hegemony was drawn in part from the important works of the Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukács (1885–1971)).⁷ Gramsci was especially interested in the role of intellectuals, whom he divided into 'traditional' and 'organic'. The former considered themselves to be free of classes, and rational: people like university academics, and ecclesiastics. Organic intellectuals were closely connected organizationally with the class structure. These were people like members of the communist party, or unions. For Gramsci, these were the intellectuals most likely to help create a counter-hegemony, through their writings, or their role in key institutions.

Gramsci's ideas became especially important during the 1960s as the prospect of violent revolution in the West seemed to recede. They often meshed closely with work which stemmed from the so-called Frankfurt school, which also sought to criticize the more dogmatic economic determinism of Soviet and much other Marxism. A leading member of this group was the American-resident German social theorist Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979). He wrote in *One Dimensional Man* of a 'totalitarian' West in which the powers of social conditioning, and the growth of welfare, had all but removed dissent (he looked to blacks, students and others for a revolutionary lead). Jurgen Habermas (1929–) similarly attacked the more crude Marxist positions, arguing that the capitalist ethic had become more technocratic, legitimating itself through science and technology, which in a sense depoliticized society (though he held that capitalism suffered from a fundamental 'legitimation crisis').⁸ Others used Gramsci's idea of hegemony, combined with the Frankfurt school's interest in the media, to study television and the press. Typical results sought to show that trade union activities were presented in a hostile manner, whereas the working of markets was largely unchallenged, or that there is a (prejudicial) 'hegemonic' portrayal of women (and other aspects of social organization where capitalism is seen as leading to exploitation and hierarchy).

Gramsci's work also had links with parts of the influential French structuralist school. A key figure here was the philosopher Louis Althusser (1918–90).⁹ Althusser, in keeping with the later Marx, held that there was no rigid relation between base and superstructure, developing the idea of the 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure. However, whereas Marx had recognized the importance of institutions such as the family, or religion, he had not seen them as part of the state. Althusser held that the state, and its influential tentacles, was now much more diverse. He included within this Ideological State Apparatus 'spheres' such as education and trade unions.

Over a hundred years after Marx had written the main corpus of his work, many Marxists were using superstructural factors to explain why 'contradictions' in the base had not produced the much-heralded down-

fall of capitalism. The growing band of Gramscians, for example, argued that capitalist societies were characterized by a hegemonic ideological conformity, which minimized conflict. However, some Marxists remained committed to a more rigid analysis of the relationship between base and superstructure, even if there were new nuances (and jargon) in the argument. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, for example, viewed ideology as mainly useful for uniting elites; subordinate groups are seen as divided (an important feature of elite control), and are influenced more by economics than ideology.¹⁰ In recent years communism may have declined as a major form of world government, but it still lives on as an important basis of academic critiques of dominant ideologies (a point relevant to the later discussion which focuses on ideological trends rather than approaches).

What ideology is (and is not)

The focus of this book is very different from that of most Marxists. In order to understand the approaches adopted here, it is helpful to begin by considering why there are *not* chapters on what many would consider the key contemporary ideologies: democracy and capitalism. The simple answer is that these are more governmental and economic procedures or systems, which can involve notably different forms. The United States, Japan, South Korea and Singapore are all capitalist systems – but are different in many ways. Certainly, the emphasis on market freedom has not involved any necessary concomitant political freedom, as many capitalist systems have been dictatorships, or at least have heavily restricted individual freedoms and rights. As far as democracy is concerned, it is important to note that it can be seen in many different forms. Common distinctions are between the more participatory forms envisaged by direct democracy, and the more limited, pluralist, representative liberal democracy. Is extensive popular participation necessary to ‘true’ democracy, or are the masses more a threat to the freedom and tolerance which many conservatives in particular see as crucial to democracy? Clearly, the term ‘democracy’ can encompass almost polar opposites. Indeed, in some ways the twentieth century – especially the period since 1945 – has seen a competition amongst almost all the main ideologies to monopolize the term ‘democracy’. Thus the pre-1989 Eastern European communist systems called themselves ‘Peoples’ Democracies’.

Arguing that democracy and capitalism are not ideologies raises the distinction between what Martin Seliger calls the ‘inclusive’ and ‘restrictive’ conceptions of ideology.¹¹ The inclusive interpretation of ideology sees a broad body of thought as ‘ideology’. The best example of such an approach would be Karl Mannheim (1893–1947), whose book *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) has been described by Seliger as ‘the first and so far the last comprehensive elaboration of a theory of ideology’. Mannheim, who had worked with Lukács, accepted Marx and Engels’ view that

ideological thought was distorted, but he argued that the reductionist use of 'ideology' could be turned against Marxism. If the 'dominant ideology' was the ideology of the ruling class, why was not the ideology of other social groups also a body of self-interested thought?¹² However, what Mannheim termed the 'total' conception of ideology seemed to make all social thought 'ideological', thus losing any possible ability to distinguish it from other potentially useful concepts such as 'political culture' or 'socialization'.

The 'restrictive' conception has been especially common among American academics, and accepts only certain types of belief system as an ideology, usually limiting the term to radical/extremist forms like communism and fascism. The argument here often focuses on whether a set of beliefs is 'monist': namely, the extent to which it is held that there is a single fundamental truth, depending on 'rationalist' knowledge (Marxism as science; the biological basis of race; etc.). Such monist ideologies involve a rejection of pluralism, tolerance and nuanced forms of arguments. A more specific argument put forward by Noël O'Sullivan holds that ideologies always involve a programmatic element.¹³ 'Formal' politics, in other words the maintenance of procedural conditions (especially laws), are not seen as 'programmatic'. Democracy could thus be ruled out as an ideology on this approach.

However, there are dangers in necessarily associating an ideology with a specific programme. Lenin was fond of the Napoleonic maxim: '*on s'engage, et puis on voit*' ('we enter the struggle, and then see [how the situation develops]'). Early Italian fascism managed to adopt contradictory programmes in quick succession; later fascism(s) often played down the need for programme, stressing instead the need for leadership and action. Where, exactly, does this leave the relationship between an ideology and a seriously taken programme? Moreover, a commitment to formal political procedural rules could be an important part of a programme – in post-communist states, say. Perhaps the crucial point is that it is hard to imagine someone supporting such a set of formal arrangements without, implicitly or overtly, holding related arguments. Concepts such as the 'rule of law', or 'checks and balances' are clearly related to a view of human nature, and/or to some knowledge of history. There would be something strange about a person who believed that the human race was universally and inherently good, and that no abuses of power had ever taken place, who also held that formal rules were required to prevent political exploitation.

This points to a way of envisaging ideologies which can include conservatism and liberalism, as well as Marxism and fascism, which does not also involve accepting that democracy is an ideology. An ideology must possess a certain set of attributes; in particular an ideology has an overt or implicit set of empirical and normative views about (i) human nature; (ii) the process of history; (iii) the socio-political structure. This is not to argue that there is necessarily a single view of each aspect, or that views are held with rigid logical consistency. For example, socialists could disagree over whether human nature was

inherently good, or something which was socially determined (and thus changeable). However, a socialist could not hold that human beings were inherently and irretrievably greedy and aggressive. Or, to take another example, Marxists could disagree over the extent to which 'great' individuals and ideas mattered in determining the course of history, but they could not adopt a purely 'high politics' or 'idealist' approach which saw such forces as the main motor of history.

This approach also helps explain why democracy is not an ideology, but nationalism is (thus meriting inclusion in the following chapters). Some might find this separation perplexing. Is not nationalism consistent with a broad variety of forms of government, both dictatorial and democratic? Have there not been liberal nationalists, fascist nationalists, Marxist nationalists, and so on – indicating that nationalism, like democracy, is compatible with many ideologies? However, there are crucial differences compared with democracy. These do not simply stem from the fact that recent years have seen in the West a contest among ideologies to monopolize the term 'democracy', whereas nationalism has been more a pariah term. Nor is the main point that some ideologies have adopted nationalism for instrumental rather than fundamental reasons. Thus those Marxists who have been sympathetic to nationalism have seen it in terms of a wider view of 'progress': nationalism was seen as a stage some societies needed to go through, rather than as an underlying principle of political organization. The central point relates more to the basic threefold framework of an ideology, outlined above. There is no fundamental democratic view on issues such as human nature, or the process of history (compare the implicit or overt views of those who see democracy as necessarily involving continual popular participation, with those who believe that the masses are a threat to the values of rationalism and toleration on which democracy is based). On the other hand, nationalists hold that there is something universally natural about people wanting to group into national units. They see history as the process of successful, and unsuccessful, nation-building and rivalry. Nationalists can differ about the implications of these views, but there is a core set of values around which disputes centre.

It also helps to set out what a political ideology is *not*:

- a) A political ideology is primarily concerned with the temporal condition. Bodies of thought mainly concerned with the divine are better termed *religions*, though there clearly can be a grey area between religion and ideology. This occurs when a religion feels it necessary to take on a more specific temporal role – in the way that Islamic fundamentalism has done recently.
- b) A political ideology should not be confused with *propaganda*. 'Propaganda' is another concept which arouses much controversy. Within communist systems propaganda has sometimes been used in a positive way to refer to rational political education, whereas 'agitation' was the term used more to refer to simplistic appeals. On the other hand, 'propaganda' tends to have pejorative connotations in the