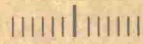


Lyman Tower Sargent



**CONTEMPORARY
POLITICAL
IDEOLOGIES**

A Comparative Analysis





Contemporary Political Ideologies

A Comparative Analysis

Tenth Edition

LYMAN TOWER SARGENT

University of Missouri–St. Louis



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To Evan

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Preface

According to Feliks Gross, political ideologies in this century have replaced religion as the focus of both human liberation and human fanaticism.¹ Ideologies like *Marxism*, *democracy*, and *nationalism*, whose names are well recognized but whose contents are not well known, form the focus of this study. The essential features of certain ideologies in the world today are presented in a way that can be readily understood. To the extent possible, the ideologies are shown as they are understood by their believers, along with some of the criticisms made by their opponents. My goal is to help readers draw their own conclusions about each ideology based on a reasonably balanced picture of that ideology.

The world is currently continuing the period of rapid change that began with the collapse of the former Soviet Union as a world power. Many of the ideologies that constitute important parts of the way people understand what is happening around them have been deeply affected by these changes. The long-term results of these changes are not yet clear, but for many people significant changes are taking place in the way they view the world.

Most notably, nationalism has become one of the most obvious aspects of the contemporary political scene. Newspapers and television are full of pictures and stories from the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and other countries where people are daily killing each other in the name of identity and political advantage. These conflicts are deeply rooted in the past histories of the areas involved, histories that helped create the identities in conflict. More than ever it is essential to understand the characteristics of nationalism to understand the daily news.

Communists are having to reassess their entire belief system. Many have not

¹Feliks Gross, *Ideologies, Goals, and Values* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. xxiii.

changed significantly. For some the failure of capitalism to bring the instant prosperity that they had hoped for has led to a nostalgia for the previous system; for others the fact that many people are actually worse off now than they had been under the previous system has led them to return to those earlier beliefs. As a result, under various labels former Communists are being elected to office in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At the other extreme, some Communists have become instant converts to capitalism, and former Communists are among the leading entrepreneurs of the new market economy and the owners and managers of the now privatized state industries.

Democratic capitalists, who generally believe that they won the Cold War, are growing worried about what they see to be the naivete of the former Communists and their expectations for rapid change. The growth of serious poverty and the emergence of powerful criminal organizations in the former communist countries indicate that the transformation from centralized, state controlled economies to market economies will not be easy.

In addition to the changes taking place in the economies of the former communist countries, there is a worldwide movement of democratization. Countries in Africa, South America, and Latin America as well as in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are in the process of trying to establish political institutions that are responsive to the wishes of the people to replace or reform institutions that were under the control of elites, a single political party, or the military.

Islam continues to be a growing force in world politics and remains generally little understood in the United States. Environmentalism is becoming an international social movement and is slowly becoming more clearly an ideology. Feminism is also becoming an international ideology and, in doing so, is becoming more complex.

Since the first edition was published over 30 years ago, this book has remained the leading text in the field. I have maintained the essential character of the book as a comparative introduction to the dominant and some minor ideologies of the modern world. Most chapters conclude with a summary of current trends and an extensive list of suggested readings. I have tried to maintain the usefulness and flexibility of the work as a teaching tool. The inclusion of updated material makes this edition the most current text on the market.

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Lyman Tower Sargent

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based on race, but a terrorist act such as the Oklahoma City bombing has been a possibility for some time.

Over the past few years we have seen people in the former Yugoslavia killing each other because of their religious, ethnic, and national differences and we have seen a civil war in Rwanda in which two peoples slaughtered each other for similar reasons. In each case the hatreds that led to the killing go deeply into the past and, in both cases, result in part because outsiders combined in one country peoples with histories of conflict. The belief in an ideology justifies mass murder.

The leader of one country contends that industries must be taken away from their private owners and operated under government supervision; the leader of another country contends that industries must be taken away from those that operate them under government supervision and sold to private owners. Each is convinced that this position is economically and morally correct. Why the difference? The answer is ideology.

These are but a few examples of the ways in which ideology affects people's behavior. Obviously, ideology is important if we are to understand what happens in the world. In addition, understanding the various ideologies of the world will help us understand our own beliefs and the beliefs of our friends and associates.

Whether we are aware of it or not, most of us are influenced by ideology. Every television program, newspaper, book, or film, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, presents an ideology. Some of these presentations are simple; others are complex. All of them influence us. As we grow up, our families, teachers, and friends help shape our personalities and beliefs by pushing us to do or believe what they do or believe. At times we also make conscious choices among beliefs and attitudes, either because we weigh one position against another and conclude that one is better or worse according to some standard, or perhaps simply because we do or do not respect a person who holds that belief.

We gradually come to the set of beliefs and attitudes with which we will live. This set of beliefs may change, but it changes less as we grow older. This is true not simply because we get "set in our ways" as we get older, although that does happen. It is also true because our entire view of the world and our explanations for both social and personal happenings depend on our particular understanding of the past. It is extraordinarily difficult to set aside a lifetime's experience and accept that we have been wrong.

Most of us are not aware of all aspects of what we believe. We do not examine our beliefs very often, if at all. We may rethink one position or change another without really thinking about it, but we rarely look carefully or thoroughly at our beliefs. We simply accept them.

In the development of our own beliefs and attitudes, we are affected by a variety of belief systems—religious and/or political views of the world that are, or are believed to be, internally consistent and consciously held by many people; we call these belief systems ideologies. At times each of us reacts on the basis of an ideology; at such times we are acting as though we accepted the ideology,