



Contemporary Political Ideologies

Sixth Edition

Lyman Tower Sargent

Contemporary Political Ideologies

A Comparative Analysis

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Preface

Today's world is influenced by many different views of life. Everyone has heard the names of most of them, yet when we see or hear the words *communism*, *democracy*, or *nationalism* we tend to react emotionally. We view one as good, another as bad, and seldom make the effort to understand what these words mean. This reaction is due to our acceptance, whether consciously recognized or not, of one or more of these views of life.

It is the purpose of this book to present the essential features of certain belief systems in the world today as objectively and understandably as possible. I have attempted to avoid any encroachment of my personal opinion into the body of this work. I am not suggesting I have been completely objective, but my goal is to achieve a position where the reader can draw conclusions based on accurate information.

This edition has been completely rethought, reorganized, and rewritten. Significant changes have been made in most chapters in an attempt to be more accurate, more complete, and more easily understood. In particular, each chapter has been brought up to date, since the world continually changes and ideologies change along with it. The chapters have been rearranged to better reflect the relationships among the ideologies.

The book maintains its essential character as a comparative introduction to the dominant and some of the minor ideologies of the modern world. I have tried to maintain the usefulness and flexibility of the work as a teaching tool. I have taught from this and previous editions, and I wish to thank my students for helping me to improve it. It can be used as a general overview of all the ideologies, or, with the use of the updated Suggested Readings at the end of each chapter, it can be used as a means of focusing on a number of selected ideologies.

In the Suggested Readings I have tried to list the most important books plus a wide enough variety to represent most of the points of view involved. I have also tried to list some bibliographies. Most of the books listed are available in paperback, but since the availability of paperback books changes rapidly, I have not tried to identify them. *Paperbound Books in Print*, which can be found in any li-

brary and most bookstores, will help identify those which are currently in print.

I wish to thank Mary T. Weiler for her help in preparing this edition.

Lyman Tower Sargent

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Introduction

When we go to the movies, watch television, or read a newspaper or novel, we are presented with a segment of the world shown from one or many angles, simple or complex, in black and white, or in the many colors and shadings in between. Each of these simple actions influences the way in which we view the world. In fact, virtually everything we do adds to our picture of the world. As we grow up, our family, teachers, and friends push and pull us in one direction or another, shaping our personalities and beliefs. 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 because we respect a person who holds that belief. The process is very complex, and this simple description cannot do it justice. Everything we do influences us and the way we relate to the world around us.

We gradually come to the set of beliefs and attitudes with which we will live, those we believe represent truth, whether or not we are consciously aware of it. This set of beliefs will change throughout our lives, but in most cases there will be basic beliefs that do not change greatly. Beliefs may change at any time, but they are less likely to change as a person grows older. Most of us are not deeply aware of what we believe. We do not, so to speak, take our beliefs out and examine them 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.

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*. We may come to accept parts of these ideologies simply because we have been taught to react positively or negatively to words which represent them. For example, someone growing up in the United States is likely to be certain that democracy is right and communism wrong even if he or she has never read a book such as this which attempts to discuss democracy and communism. We react to words because they have emotional content even if they do not have intellectual content. Most people, of course, have some emotional and some intellectual content for most important words.

At times all of us react on the basis of an ideology; at such times we are acting as if we accepted the ideology, even if we don't accept all of the attitudes and beliefs that make up the complete ideology. On the other hand, there are people, often called *ideologues* or *true believers*, who seem to interpret all phenomena from the perspective of their ideology. Their view of the world and their answers to all questions are provided for them by their ideologies.

There has been much controversy among political scientists, sociologists, and others about the meaning and effect of ideology. I shall avoid this debate as much as possible, as it seldom relates to the purpose of this book—the presentation of the major political ideologies in the modern world.¹

The whole approach of this book assumes that ideologies do affect people, and in this chapter I suggest a number of ways in which this takes place. I have already suggested some of these effects, even on those of us—the majority—who do not have fully developed ideologies. Imagine, then, the effect on people who know that their ideology provides them with an accurate picture of the world, of the only correct relations among the members of society, and of the only right way of conducting economic and political affairs.

Having suggested in a somewhat loose way the manner in which ideology functions, I want to look at the concept more carefully. An *ideology is a value or belief system accepted as fact or truth by some group*. It is composed of sets of attitudes toward the various institutions and processes of society. It provides the believer with a

¹The reader who is interested in the controversy over the nature of ideology should consult the Suggested Readings at the end of the chapter.

picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and in so doing, it organizes the tremendous complexity of the world into something fairly simple and understandable. This is the point of the word system; ideologies are organized or patterned beliefs. The degree of organization and the simplicity of the resulting picture vary considerably from ideology to ideology, and the ever-increasing complexity of the world tends to blur all the pictures. At the same time, however, the basic pictures provided by the ideologies remain fairly constant.

A distinction must be made between a simple belief in something and an ideology, which can be clearly distinguished from an individual's belief in something. An ideology must be a more or less connected set of beliefs which provides the believer with a fairly thorough picture of the world.²

In this book, I shall discuss social and political ideology.³ I shall only discuss ideologies which have significant social and political elements and are predominately secular in nature. Adding philosophical, religious, or other beliefs that might be labeled ideological would be interesting but cannot be undertaken in a book of this size.

In the past ideology meant something a bit different. Karl Marx (1818–83) described as ideological any set of political *illusions* produced by the social experience of a class. For Marx, a person's membership in a particular class produces a picture of the world shaped by the experiences of that class. Thus, it is almost impossible for an individual class member to form an accurate conception of the world. Marx argued that the socialization process (i.e., the process by which an individual comes to accept the values of a society) is strongly shaped by one's place in the class system of that society. The individual gains his or her beliefs as a member of a class, largely because the social system requires that certain classes accept significantly different standards of living and so forth.⁴

Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) gave a description of ideology which is close to Marx's, except Mannheim attempted to avoid the negative connotations that Marx intended in his definition. For

²See, for example, Samuel H. Barnes, "Ideology, and the Organization of Conflict: On the Relationship between Political Thought and Behavior," *Journal of Politics* 28 (August 1966), pp. 514–15.

³Many writers define ideology even more narrowly. For example, see Robert E. Lane, *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does* (New York: Free Press, 1962), pp. 14–15.

⁴The picture of the world provided by Marxism will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Marx, ideologies were illusions which kept a class from understanding its true place in society. For Mannheim, they were—in what he calls “the total conception of ideology”—“the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind” of an age or a group, such as a class.⁵ This means an ideology is the set of beliefs which filters the mass of information we perceive; rather like the blinders on a horse, an ideology allows us only a limited view of the world. Mannheim also used what he called “the particular conception of ideology.” Here he was closer to Marx because in this usage he said that the ideas of our opponents are “more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation, a true recognition of which would not be in accord with his interest.”⁶ Again, this is the belief that the other person’s ideas, but not ours, are false representations of the world, an illusion or a mask, depending on whether they are consciously recognized or not.

A third writer, not as often considered in this context, deserves mention. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)⁷ made one point about beliefs such as ideologies which must be noted. These belief systems, he argued, are usually illusions. These illusions are largely based on the distortion or repression of our psychological needs, but they still provide an organized framework for explaining the world and its ills. An accepted explanation, even one which is demonstrably wrong, can be comforting. Thus, Freud, like Marx, saw ideologies as illusions that keep us deluded and content with a difficult if not intolerable condition. Freud prescribed psychoanalysis if the illusion becomes sufficiently pathological; Marx prescribed revolution.

In the 1950s and 60s a debate started, particularly in the United States, as to whether ideological politics had ended in the West.⁸ In a few cases it was argued that there had never been ideological politics in the United States. From the perspective of 1983, the

⁵Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936), p. 56.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁷Freud has been the subject of two studies designed to introduce his thought to social scientists: Paul Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); and Thomas Johnston, *Freud and Political Thought* (New York: Citadel Press, 1965).

⁸For the debate, see Mostafa Rejai, ed., *Decline of Ideology?* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971); and Chaim I. Waxman, ed., *The End of Ideology Debate* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968). The book which gave rise to the debate in the United States was Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

debate seems a bit foolish. Even if ideological politics had never before existed in the United States, they do now, and the roots of the contemporary situation go back to precisely the time when the debate over the end of ideology was raging.

Still, the debate is interesting because it reflects an attitude toward ideology which continues to be expressed. The major exponents of the end of ideology contended both that ideology had ended in the West (if it had ever existed) and that this was a good thing because ideology was a bad thing. Ideological politics were seen as divisive politics—politics which made compromise impossible, which drove people apart. Ideology also hindered Western progress toward the good society. A better society could have been possible in the near future through the usual practices of compromise politics had not ideology got in the way.

The participants in the debate differed on both what they were talking about and whether or not the end of ideology was a good thing. Some people suggested ideology was ending in Communist countries as well as Western ones. Again, this was generally seen as a good thing. The single point the debaters came closest to agreeing on was that ideology is bad for us and if it hasn't ended it should.

As an example of ideology in current usage, let us take an oversimplified and extreme case which will help illustrate both the nature of ideology and the process of change within an ideology. In the past, movies presented viewers with a simple, clearly defined view of the clash of good and evil in the American West. The good guys and the bad guys were clearly identified by white clothes and a white horse for the hero and black clothes and a black horse for the villain. The good guys always won, and the hero rode off into the sunset without any entangling alliances to keep him from his next battle with evil.

Although much of the basic pattern has not changed and the identical pattern can be found in the type of science fiction known as "space opera," many Westerns today show the two sides dressed the same and riding the same color horses. In addition, some go so far as to present the bad guy as not really bad—simply misunderstood—and the good guy is not always the epitome of all virtue. Finally, the modern hero is usually attracted to women, something that never would have occurred to the earlier white-hatted hero.

These differences illustrate some of the problems in analyzing ideologies as they change over time. In some belief systems or ideologies, there is the old, rigid good-bad division. In others, there is such a complexity of factors at work that it is difficult, or even

impossible, to tell the good guys from the bad guys. In this situation, a believer is often influenced by more than one ideology. He or she is influenced by, for example, the positions of a political party, a church, and a business firm or labor union. Each of these positions can constitute a partially or fully developed belief system or ideology. Although some parts of these systems may coincide perfectly or closely enough not to cause conflict within the individual, other parts may differ greatly and may, if noticed, immobilize the individual because of fundamental differences between two beliefs held at the same time.

It should not be concluded that we all have ideologies. We all have beliefs, in large part gained from identification with or membership in some group. However, unless the beliefs are recognized or acted upon, with or without recognition, it is difficult to say we have an ideology.

There are conflicting ideologies in all societies. Assume for the present that people select among ideological options.⁹ We can, by overstating the case, illustrate the dilemma. An individual is free to pick and choose among the variety of available positions. Most people will not be aware of the wide variety of ideologies that exist, but when they become aware of it, they may become confused, apathetic, or inactive. The wide variety of options available in an open system tends to deemphasize ideology; the conflict within the individual, therefore, does not become as important as it would within a system in which there is only a single official ideology and the individual disagrees with that ideology.

Thus, we have the phenomenon we noticed in the American movies of the Old West. As a society grows more and more complex, it becomes harder and harder to present a simple division between good and bad, between the white and black hats. Black and white are mixed and become gray. We have discovered that the world is not as simple as the older movies would have us believe; the new Western is a reflection of this recognition.

Even with this change in the pattern of some ideologies, they all attempt to organize our complex world into a pattern which will at least give some signposts to help the believer distinguish good from bad. Finally, in all of them we shall see that the ideal and reality do not quite meet, and we shall witness a struggle to get them to meet through changes either in the ideal or in reality.

⁹People do not generally choose an ideology but are brought up in such a way that they grow into their belief pattern without ever making a conscious choice.

In any society, different segments of the population will hold different ideologies. For example, within the United States today, the overwhelming majority, if asked, would call themselves believers in democracy. But some would call themselves anarchists, Fascists, and so forth. Every society exhibits a variety of ideologies. In no case will a given society be so completely dominated by a single ideology as to have no ideological alternatives available within the system.

Many of those willing to label themselves democrats and so forth do not know the meaning of the terms they use or do not act in the way the ideology would be expected to lead them. But most people build up a pattern of behavior some aspects of which come directly from the dominant political ideology of the country in which they live. For example, if one thinks about it, it is surprising that people accept the outcome of elections rather than fighting for their side when they lose. Most people are so conditioned to accept loss in elections that they do so without ever thinking about revolt. This is not always the case, though. There are countries in most parts of the world where election results may produce fighting to try to change them.

There are differences within each major ideology which make each one a cluster of ideologies. Democracy is perhaps the most obvious example, being composed of at least two major categories—democratic capitalism and democratic socialism. All who place themselves in either of these categories believe themselves to be democrats, and some see themselves as the only true democrats. In addition to this major division, there are numerous disagreements over the emphasis placed on certain aspects of democracy and over the tactics used in achieving desired goals. This phenomenon is not characteristic of the democratic ideology alone. As we know from reading the news from Eastern Europe and China in recent years, there are significant disagreements among communists over what is essential to communism as an ideology and what is nonessential and can be changed, modified slightly, or completely discarded.

There is no ideology completely free from this sort of disagreement. When one speaks of a single, official ideology, it should be recognized that even these so-called single, official ideologies are not completely monolithic but are composed of a variety of factions and disagreements which together make up the ideology and allow it to change to meet changing conditions.

To reiterate, individuals may hold a variety of beliefs which may be in conflict. Normally, they do not recognize the conflicting na-

ture of these beliefs and apply them to different situations without ever looking at their values as a whole. The person either fails to see the problem, argues that the positions are reconcilable, or gradually rejects one position. This presents one of the most serious obstacles to a clear presentation and understanding of ideologies; it will remain a theme in the consideration of each ideology.

The ideologies selected for consideration have been chosen on the basis of two main criteria: their importance in the world today and the desire to present the broad range of political beliefs. Nationalism, democracy, and communism clearly fall in the first category. Each one must be understood before the news of the day can be intelligently grasped. Anarchism clearly belongs in the second category. Although anarchism has never been dominant for long in any area, it still has many adherents and has a continuing popularity. A survey of political ideology would not be complete if anarchy were ignored. The others fall somewhere between these two categories. Each is important for an understanding of recent and current history but not to the same degree as nationalism, democracy, and communism. In addition, each represents a point on the spectrum of political beliefs which is not clearly occupied by any of the others.

One, nationalism, is different from all the others because it affects all the others. Nationalism is important because it is part of the other ideologies; therefore, it will be discussed first so it will be possible to see the ways in which it affects the other ideologies.

Since nationalism is different from the other ideologies discussed here, some people argue that it is not an ideology. Nationalism is an ideology in that it fits the general definition of an ideology—a value or belief system accepted as fact or truth by some group. In addition, the modern world simply cannot be understood without understanding nationalism. Therefore, even though nationalism is an ideology of a different type, it is essential to the understanding of both the world we live in and the other ideologies.

The wide variety of ideologies raises a further problem for the analyst. Since each ideology differs significantly from the others, there is no single approach appropriate to all of them. Each ideology emphasizes different aspects of society and ignores other aspects which are stressed by another ideology. Therefore, it is not possible to treat each ideology in exactly the same way. It is necessary to present the ideology as it actually is rather than as we think an ideology should be. Thus, each one will be analyzed as its nature dictates.

Yet, it is desirable to compare them. Why compare? Political

scientists compare political systems and political ideologies for a number of reasons. At the simplest level, we compare in order to remind ourselves and others that there are different ways of doing things; in the context of ideologies, there are differing beliefs in the world. Equally important is to realize that people who hold these beliefs are as sure that they are right as we are sure that we are right. On a more complicated level, we compare things because it helps us better understand other people and ourselves—to see what both they and we do and believe. Understanding something better is (according to what might be called a teacher's ideology) always good. Understanding is also important because we can't change anything unless we understand it. Comparing helps us both to better understand what we do and believe and to recognize that there are other ways of doing and believing which might be useful to us.

How we compare can also help illuminate why we compare. We could just study other political systems or political beliefs without ever comparing them. But when we compare, we discover both great differences and great similarities. At the same time, we discover that differences often hide the fact that the purposes of the different practices and beliefs are quite similar. We find, for example, that most belief systems have a way of ranking people in some sort of hierarchy, but we also find that the basis of the ranking is very different. Thus, we conclude people disagree over what is most important about the differences among people but agree that there is some basis for making distinctions among people. In other words, we find that a difference is also a similarity.

This shows us that our complex world can be understood. In a world which is so often in conflict it is absolutely essential that we strive to understand both ourselves and others. Comparing political systems and beliefs is one small step toward that understanding.

To compare the differing ideologies, some way must be devised so similar information is made available for each ideology. This will not be completely possible because of the different emphases found in each ideology.

In order to achieve some sort of comparability, the complex of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions which we call society has been divided into five segments:

1. The value system.
2. The socialization system.
3. Social stratification and social mobility.
4. The economic system.
5. The political system.

This breakdown is simply a very loose set of categories designed to provide some minimal order to the analysis. These categories merely allow us to describe the attitudes found in the various ideologies.

Any analysis of any part of society, including the value system, is an attempt to answer a series of questions regarding the various institutions and processes mentioned above. This series of questions can be divided into two parts: (1) How should society function? and (2) How does society actually function? The answers to the first question give us a picture of the value system. The answers to the second question give us an image of the social system in operation.

Below is a set of questions designed to provide a fairly complete analysis of the assumptions of an ideology. By using questions like these, one is able to compare the ideologies.

- I. Human nature.
 - A. What are the basic characteristics of human beings?
 - B. What effect does human nature have upon the political system?
- II. The origin of society and government or the state.
 - A. What is the origin of society? Why does it develop?
 - B. What is the origin of government or the state? Why does it develop?
- III. Political obligation (duty, responsibility, law).
 - A. Why do people obey the government?
 - B. Why should people obey the government, or should they obey it at all?
 - C. Is disobedience ever justifiable?
 - D. Is revolution ever justifiable?
- IV. Freedom and liberty (rights—substantive and procedural).
 - A. Are men and women free in any way vis-à-vis the government?
 - B. Should they be free vis-à-vis the government?
 - C. Assuming that some type or types of freedom are both possible and desirable, what should these be? Should they be limited or unlimited? Who places the limits?
- V. Equality.
 - A. Are individuals in any way “naturally” equal?