

Ideologies in Perspective

All governments follow, to some degree, a certain set of ideologies or political ideas. In the past two centuries, some ideologies have been particularly significant. Five of them are liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism, and fascism. (As you will see, there are two forms of liberalism, classical and reform.) All five originated in western Europe, but in some form have had influence throughout the world.

The names of political parties do not always correspond precisely to ideological labels. Liberalism, for instance, should not be automatically equated with Canada's Liberal Party, conservatism with Canada's Progressive Conservative Party, nor communism with the modern governments of the Soviet Union and China. A political party may have its roots in one ideology, but also have policies which reflect other ideologies.

The five ideologies named above can be examined from three perspectives: philosophical, political, and economic. Ideologies may be very similar when looked at from one perspective, but poles apart when seen from another perspective.

The Philosophical Perspective: Left Wing and Right Wing

Ideologies can be compared on the basis of attitudes towards or beliefs about the nature of human beings and the desirability of progress. Supporters of some ideologies believe in the capacity of society to use new ideas and technology to improve itself and advance. In varying ways, communism, socialism, and liberalism all advocate progress and have an optimistic view of human nature.

Supporters of other ideologies tend to look back to a past, usually more imagined than real, in which they believe society worked better. When these ideologies call for change, the changes are seen not as a means of progressing, but rather as a way of restoring past values and institutions which have been lost, or are in danger of being lost. In very different ways, both conservatism and fascism serve as examples of ideologies which uphold traditions and have a cautious view of human nature.

Ideologies which support progress are sometimes referred to as **left wing**, while those which support traditions are labelled **right wing**. These terms were used in the late eighteenth century, during the French Revolution. In the French National Assembly, the group that wanted the Revolution to move ahead rapidly sat to the left of the Speaker of the Assembly. Their opponents, who wanted the Revolution slowed or even halted, sat on the right.

The Political Perspective: Democracy and Dictatorship

Ideologies can also be compared on the basis of attitudes towards the relationship between a government and its people. Some governments are the responsibility of large groups of people, while other governments are entrusted to a few leaders or to just one.

The term **democracy** comes from the Greek words *demos*, "people", and *kratos*, "power" or "rule". Literally, therefore, it means "people power" or "rule by the people". Today, the word is generally applied to any system of government in which citizens can freely elect representatives.

While free elections are perhaps the feature that most clearly distinguishes a true democracy, others are important as well. If its newspapers are free to criticize the government, if political parties are allowed to exist, if its courts are not subject to interference by political leaders, then a country can be described as democratic.

Most of the varieties of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism practised today could be termed "democratic" to one degree or another. It would be difficult to say whether any of the three is necessarily more democratic than the others. In historic terms, however, conservatism has tended to be somewhat less democratic than the other two ideologies. For instance, nineteenth century conservatives often argued that only property owners should be allowed to vote because only they had a vested interest; they were therefore the only ones entitled to have a political voice. (Classical liberals sometimes made the same argument, however.) Reform liberals and socialists were the first to urge **universal suffrage**, the right of all adult citizens to vote, regardless of their wealth, status, or sex.

The term **dictatorship** is derived from the Latin verb *dictare*, "to declare repeatedly", "to order". In classical Roman times, a single leader was sometimes temporarily appointed to guide the state in time of crisis. Whatever the leader said became the law of the land; hence the word **dictator**, "the one who orders". "Dictator" refers to a person in power who rules as he or she sees fit, without being answerable to the people. A dictatorship is a system of government in which the leader, who usually has a small group of powerful supporters, rules according to personal decisions and suppresses opposing opinions.

Modern fascist and communist governments are types of dictatorships. Both are examples of what political scientists call **totalitarian** government, that is, a system in which government is in total control of all aspects of political, social, and cultural life. In schools, clubs, and all other forms of social gathering, the official ideology of the state is constantly visible. A good example of this was seen in the Hitler Youth movement of Nazi Germany. From an early age, student members wore uniforms, chanted slogans, and otherwise participated in special clubs and events designed to make them willing supporters of Nazism, a form of fascism. Citizens are often not free to move about



in search of a new job or home, but are assigned specific locations and employment. The media are given little choice about what they may report. Totalitarian governments justify the enforcement of such controls with the argument that the needs of the community (*i.e.*, the state) are more important than individual liberties.

Ironically, virtually all communist countries refer to themselves as “people’s democracies”. While there may be elections, there is only one legally recognized party—the Communist Party. A choice is available to voters; it usually is a choice among candidates of that one party. Communist regimes assert that their elections do allow citizens to signal their approval of the government, so that each regime is in fact a democracy.

The Economic Perspective: Private Ownership *versus* Public Ownership

Ideologies can be compared as well on the basis of attitudes towards the role of government in a country’s economic life and the actual control the government exercises over the economy. Economic freedom and economic equality are valued to differing degrees by each ideology. Economic freedom is closely linked to the idea of **private ownership** or **capitalism**. Under this system, business, rather than government, is the major producer of goods and services. Economic equality embodies the concept of **public ownership**, a system in which government, rather than business, is the chief producer.

The Hitler Youth movement of Nazi Germany participated in highly visible events to promote the ideology of the state.



This family farm at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, is privately owned but is subject to government regulations.



Collective farms in Communist China are cultivated to produce maximum yields.

No country in the world has a government which is true democracy or total dictatorship; likewise, no country has an economic system which is true public ownership or completely private ownership. Most countries, however, clearly favour one kind of ownership over the other. In communist countries, the presence of public ownership is overwhelming. In socialist countries, public ownership is prevalent, although private ownership may exist and be regulated by government. Reform liberalism favours private ownership, but will accept government ownership in certain situations. Where conservatism or classical liberalism dominates, so does private ownership. Private ownership exists under fascism, but it is subject to many government restrictions and controls.

Two philosophers, Adam Smith and Karl Marx, are identified with ideologies which advocate opposing economic systems. Smith, a leading classical-liberal thinker, is usually regarded as the chief exponent of private ownership. Marx is considered the primary advocate of public ownership.

Smith's book, *The Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, put forward the idea of an economic system governed by an "invisible hand", the metaphor he used to describe capitalism. Smith claimed that the supply of goods and services needed by society would naturally match the demand. Sellers would see a need, attempt to fill it, and try to make a profit. Buyers would determine the need and the price they were willing to pay for the goods or services. Thus, in seeking their own private interests, buyers and sellers would create an economic system. These private interests of individuals, in other words, the "invisible hand", would render government interference unnecessary. The system would work of its own accord. The term *laissez-faire* is often used to describe this system.

Nearly three-quarters of a century later, in 1848, Karl Marx expressed the opposite view in *The Communist Manifesto*, which he wrote in collaboration with Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels argued that the "invisible hand" had not benefitted all of society, as Smith had forecast. Instead, capitalism had allowed the bourgeoisie—the capitalists—to concentrate in their own hands a hugely disproportionate amount of land, wealth, industry, and political power.

In Marx's view, the common good could not and would not result from the existence of any "invisible hand". It would be attained only when the revolution of the proletariat put the workers in charge of government, and of the instruments of production. In other words, having gained political power, the proletariat would also gain economic power. With this power would come economic equality: no-one would be the economic servant of anyone else.

Neither Smith's nor Marx's ideas have ever been practised exactly as they were expressed. Yet the spirit of both men's ideas is still very much alive; the concepts of private and public ownership are still competing in today's world.

QUESTIONS

1. What is implied when a person is described as being "left wing"? How would such a person be likely to vote in British Columbia?
2. What is universal suffrage?
3. What is totalitarian government?
4. Is fascism an example of a right wing or a left wing ideology? Why?
5. (a) Is private or public ownership more common in Canada?
(b) Name one example of each which is found in British Columbia.

The Evolution of Ideologies

Now you will examine the historical roots of the five ideologies, to see how they have evolved over time. It is important to keep in mind as you read that ideologies are not concrete physical entities. Two political scientists, M. Dickerson and T. Flanagan, have expressed this idea well:

... remember that all ideologies are abstractions. They do not really exist; what exists are real people with their individual thoughts and organizations that adopt statements or programs. It is unlikely that the beliefs of any person or organization perfectly fit the description... of particular ideologies. Yet there are tendencies and common concerns that unite diverse thinkers, even if they do not agree on every point. Think of ideologies as broad tendencies of thought existing over long periods of time....

Liberalism

"Liberal" comes from the Latin adjective *liber*, meaning "free". "Liberalism" is a very broad, sweeping term which means different things to different people. Essentially, however, two forms of liberalism can be identified. The older, original version is called **classical liberalism**, while the newer, modern type is called **reform liberalism**.

The term "liberal" first came to be widely used during the late eighteenth century in western Europe. Classical liberals were strong believers in both economic and intellectual freedom. In their view of human nature, people were basically good creatures, capable of improving their lot in life through their own efforts. The idea of progress—the belief that social, economic, and political conditions would get better with each generation—was central to classical liberalism. Classical liberals believed that government should not get involved in the economic and intellectual life of the community any more than necessary. They were not particularly concerned with economic or intellectual equality.

Reform liberalism has its roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the term "liberal" is used today, it is this type

of liberalism which is meant. Reform liberalism differs from classical liberalism in its much stronger commitment to economic equality, which supporters believe can be brought about by limited government intervention in the economy. Nonetheless, reform liberalism maintains classical liberalism's commitment to progress and intellectual freedom.

The change in liberal ideology was affected most profoundly by the writings of the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946). Keynes argued that governments should become involved in the economy by controlling the supply of money, even if this meant that governments would spend their way into debt. Such spending was seen as necessary to ensure that all citizens would have access to the basics of life: decent food, housing, and employment. Reform liberalism might be regarded as an important focus of the modern Liberal Party of Canada.

Conservatism

“Conservative” comes from the Latin verb *conservare*, meaning “to save”. Conservatism emerged in the late eighteenth century in Britain, as a reaction against the excesses of liberalism. Perhaps the major thinker of the conservative tradition was the British statesman Edmund Burke (1729–97).

Early conservatives, such as Burke, believed that the monarch should have authority over the elected Parliament, and that the traditional organization of society and politics should be preserved. Later conservatives agreed that gradual, progressive change was acceptable, whereas radical, abrupt change should be avoided.

Supporters of conservatism have a strong commitment to intellectual equality and believe that moral issues are sometimes a matter of public, not merely private, concern. They may, for example, favour some kind of censorship in order to protect what are perceived to be community standards.

Like classical liberals, conservatives are strong believers in economic freedom. Unlike both classical and reform liberals, conservatives have only a moderate commitment to intellectual freedom.

Some representatives in Canada's Progressive Conservative Party, when they were elected in 1984, tended to advocate economic freedom and intellectual equality. For example, certain government members argued for tax advantages to corporations, and stronger anti-pornography measures. These positions paralleled the traditional conservative position. Yet it is worth noting that other members of the same Conservative government advocated contrary positions.

Socialism

The ideas that gave rise to socialism have been traced by some political scientists to the works of Plato, the great Greek philosopher of the fourth century B.C. Modern socialist ideas are more closely linked to



Children outside a Swedish movie theatre protest the decision of the Swedish Board of Film Censorship to restrict their viewing of “E.T.”. Their signs say “Let us see E.T.”, and “Films for kids should be seen by kids”. What is the purpose of government censorship?

saving will probably be made by this operation. The cargo was 200,000 dollars.

TEXTILE GOODS.

late arrivals—comprising

ages of Brown and Bleached
Brown and Bleached Sheet-
willed Stripes, Plaids, Checks, Sa-
Stripes, Blue Nunquam, Cloths,

Goods,



Stripes, 7 do,
alocous, double and single width.

NEW HARMONY, INDIANA.

ARTIFICERS and MECHANICS.

Wanted immediately, at New Harmony, the following persons, who are required to be first hands, and thoroughly experienced in their respective branches of business, viz:

Farmer,	Wrestlers,
Gardener,	Plumber, Painter and
Vinedresser,	Glazier,
Foreman Cotton Spin- ner,	Coopers,
Foreman Woolen Spin- ner,	Tarrier,
Cotton Weaver,	Timber,
Woolen Weaver,	Printer,
Need Maker,	Watch and Clock M- ker,
Steam Engineer,	Lock and Gun Smith,
Dyer,	Brass and Iron Foundry
Fuller,	Bookbinder,
Stocking machine Wea- ver,	Mathematical Instru- ment Maker,
Distiller,	Brushmaker,
Brewer and Malster,	Ropemaker,
Saddler,	Wheelwright,
Tanner,	Millwright,
Carrier,	Millsweyer,
Shoemakers,	Oil Miller,
Blasms,	Cook,
Bricklayers,	Launderess and Wash- erwomen.

The most satisfactory references and testimonials

Robert Owen (1771-1858)

Robert Owen put his socialist ideals into practice by establishing experimental communities. He placed this advertisement in a New Harmony, Indiana, newspaper to recruit the population for one of these communities.

Could a modern self-sufficient community be created by persons engaged in the above occupations? Explain your answer.

the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen. The term "socialism" itself first became used extensively in the early nineteenth century, in the writings of commentators upon the Industrial Revolution. During the Industrial Revolution, manual tools were replaced by powerful machines, and the manufacturing operations were concentrated in large factories. Socialist theorists of the time believed that the community, not wealthy individuals or small groups of individuals, should own these industrial enterprises. Government intervention in the economy, they claimed, would produce economic equality. This, in turn, would make the individual truly free.

Like both classical and reform liberals, early socialists were believers in progress and the capacity of innovative ideas and institutions to improve society. They were generally in agreement with the liberal view that human beings were basically good. The essential difference between liberalism and socialism was that liberals believed individuals could be truly free with limited government, while socialists believed government itself could make individuals free.

In Canada, the dividing line between socialism and reform liberalism, as represented by the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Liberal Party, is sometimes unclear. Both parties have policies which support the economic equality of individuals in society. However, because the NDP also has policies which advocate the economic equality of workers in the workplace, it could be said to be more deeply rooted in socialism.



Posters such as this one were displayed by the leaders of the Russian Revolution, who believed that private ownership of land contributed to social inequality. This particular poster urged farmers to join publicly owned collectives.

Communism

The thinkers most closely associated with early communism are Karl Marx (1818–83) and Friedrich Engels (1820–95). Like the socialists, Marx had economic equality as his ideal. However, he thought that it would come about not by the cooperation of groups sharing property voluntarily, but rather by violent conflict, because the people who held power would not give it up voluntarily.

Marx and Engels concentrated on the negative effects of capitalism. They saw history as a record of the struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed. The most recent oppressors were the wealthy capitalists—the bourgeoisie—and the oppressed were the mistreated, underpaid workers—the proletariat.

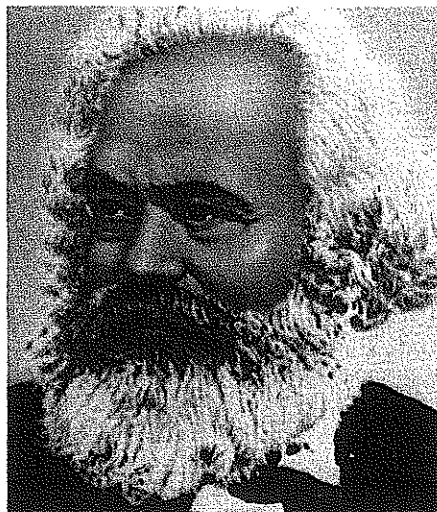
Marx and Engels predicted that, in the industrialized nations of western Europe, the proletariat would eventually rise up and destroy the capitalist system. A new system would gradually progress through a number of stages, with the final and permanent one being communism. In theory, a truly communist society would see not only the abolition of private property, but also the disappearance (in Marx's phrase, the "withering away") of government. These two developments would bring about the economic equality of all people.

In fact, the various communist regimes in the world today bear very little resemblance to the future society envisioned by Marx. For one thing, the first communist revolution, which took place in 1917, did not occur in industrialized western Europe (as Marx had predicted) but rather in czarist Russia, a country which, at the time, was still largely agricultural. In modern communist countries government has not withered away, as Marx suggested; on the contrary, it intrudes into every aspect of economic and intellectual life.

Socialist and communist ideologies resemble each other in that both advocate economic equality. However, socialists believe this is to be achieved peacefully, through government intervention.

Karl Marx (left), believed that economic equality would come about through violent conflict between capitalists and workers. He and Friedrich Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

Friedrich Engels (right), a friend and collaborator of Karl Marx, was a philosopher, economist, and historian.



Fascism

Historically, fascism is largely regarded as a phenomenon of the period from the early 1920's to the end of World War II in 1945. The word "fascism" is Italian in origin, and was first used by the Italian leader Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), who headed his country's government from 1922 to 1943. Individual freedoms were permitted only if and when they contributed to the good of the nation.

In Mussolini's view, all the economic and intellectual resources of the Italian state were to be directed towards the building of a militarily strong and fiercely proud, united country. In a fascist state, there was no room for intellectual freedom, and only limited room for economic freedom. While private property and private businesses existed, they were tightly regulated by the government which they were supposed to serve.

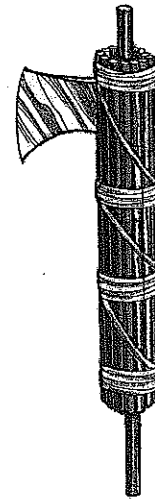
In virtually all countries of Europe except the Soviet Union, fascist movements of varying strength existed between the early 1920's and 1945. (Indeed, there were fascist movements in Canada at the time.) Italy was the first self-proclaimed fascist state. Others soon came into being, of which the most notable one was Germany, where Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) Party took power in 1933.

Communism can be described as an ideology linked to a vision of the future. Fascism, on the other hand, can be described as an ideology which is linked to the past. It is based on the notion that a mythical, ideal age once existed which could be reborn. In this mythical era, the citizens were "racially pure" and were ranked in a strict social order ruled by a strong father figure. The Nazis also saw the Germans as a superior race descended from ancient Aryan warriors. Nazism was to be a process of recreating the ethnic purity and military supremacy which Germany had lost since that mythical time.

The fascist ideology found in Germany or Italy in the 1930's is no longer practised. However, the term is still used occasionally to describe countries with a military government that keeps a tight rein on intellectual and economic life. The regime of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, who in 1973 took over the government of Chile, is sometimes described as an example of modern-day fascism.

The Fasces

The term comes ultimately from the Latin fasces, which denotes a bundle of rods bound together around an axe. In ancient Rome, the rods and axe symbolized the government's power to keep law and order (the rods to control and correct the people) and, if necessary, to mete out punishment and death (the axe of execution).



QUESTIONS

1. (a) What is the position of classical liberalism on (i) economic freedom and (ii) intellectual freedom?
(b) How does reform liberalism differ from classical liberalism?
2. (a) What is the position of conservatism on (i) change and (ii) intellectual equality?
(b) How does conservatism differ from reform liberalism? from classical liberalism?