

# POLITICAL IDEAS PROPEL POLITICAL PROCESS

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## Abstract

*Ideas and processes are inter-related. One is a cause and other is an effect. Every system has a unique chain of ideas and processes. Only an idea provokes an action in an individual who is an essential ingredient and catalyst of a family, society and a nation. All are the outcome of a social system. Social system is a soft medium for human coexistence and cohesion. Both generate a chain of actions and reactions between human beings. An action of man is the translation of his/her mental image or an idea. In this sense a chain of actions is a process, which determines relations between humans within a social framework, and this is the beginning of politics therefore political Ideas propel political process. This study is an attempt to assess development of political ideas, their transformation into an ideology and the role of ideology into political process, which is the only base of social mobilization.*

## Introduction

Politics, it may be emphasized, is motivated by the desire to erect a best system of governance. For this purpose every one thinks accordingly and elites in society attempt to conglomerate diverse thoughts into a particular idea which initiates a political process in a particular direction through a relationship between political process and ideas at various level in society and this is observable in the nature of rules, government's policies and political system. Similarly the constitution of each state indicates highest impact of political ideas in political process e.g. The Bill of Rights in British Parliament in 1689 had projected the belief that good governance was subjected to dispersal of political power in the landed aristocracy represented in the parliament<sup>1</sup>. The US

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constitution is based on the belief of popular sovereignty and democracy, therefore, both separations of power and checks- balances operate in the political system<sup>2</sup>. Former Soviet Union constitution of 1936 aimed at economic and political equality irrespective of political realities<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, French political process from 1958-1968 was influenced by de Gaulle's political ideas. Indian secularism promotes Hindu fundamentalism because majority practice Hindu conventions, belief and mythologies. Pakistan's constitutions have been experimenting liberal and controlled democracy, presidential and parliamentary norms but they support military autocracy which has always been subjected to political ideas of autocrat's e.g. Basic Democracy, Islamization and finally Enlightened Moderation to mould and re-mould ideological dimensions of the society. In the Arab countries political process is affected by a common belief of hostility towards Israel. This analytical review presents that political actions in a political system are always prompted by ideas but they are different in the degree of expression. However they generate politics of influence and control to achieve political stability.

### **Politics of Influence and Control**

Continuous competition among organized groups is an essential characteristic of liberal democracies to maintain balance of influence in the political system. This process creates overall consensus on political objectives and methods to maintain political stability through free elections on universal suffrage, representative institutions and civil freedoms<sup>4</sup>. The elites simply extract issues out of political process that may pose challenges to political ideas. These issues not only induce political cooperation among political interest groups, which exert influence by their compliance, or noncompliance with polices of

government. Here emerges the politics of influence and control and political process continues through political interest groups and political parties. Both promote their political ideas as the very basis of their common interest and peoples support convert these interests into popular objectives. This is the instrument of political control and influence exercised by government and political interest groups and parties.

A group is defined as an aggregation of individuals who interact to pursue a common interest. Since individuals do not necessarily interact directly with each other but their ideas interlink their thought process and this is the case of all types of groups particularly political interest group possessing political objectives as common interest. Although both political interest group and party fit under the general definition cited in the beginning of this paragraph but both have diverse role and functions in society. Therefore both enter into political process with reference to the political ideas expressed in their manifesto<sup>5</sup>. The basic aim of both is to expand their influence and to enhance their political control through their political ideas. The convergence of these ideas into an articulate, coherent systematic pattern breeds political ideology.

### **Political Ideology**

Ideologies are action-oriented system of ideas. They are sets of ideas dealing with change or defense of political structure and distribution of political power in a political system<sup>6</sup>. Further an ideology consists of a systematic and all embracing political doctrine that claims to give a complete and universal theory of people and society and to derive a program of action<sup>7</sup>. In this sense ideology embraces everything relevant to our political condition. The term ideology is of French origin, having

been first used by Destutt de Tracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but it was widely recognized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the publications of Karl Marx's, "The German Ideology" and Karl Mannheim's "Ideology and Utopia"<sup>8</sup>. What we understand that ideology is concerned with political beliefs, values and legitimacy to the form and role of government and the nature of state's system. With strongest motivational force an ideology develops a framework for people's mobilization towards political goals in a shape of mass movements under leaders and political parties. Further being a set of political beliefs, political ideologies involve program of political action which draw on large scale views about human nature and historical development<sup>9</sup>. In modern World political ideologies not only influence beliefs, values and behaviors of citizens, leaders and nations but they also significantly affect social, political and economic systems of a state. They also address the issues of property, state and individuals in society, which exposes an ideological spectrum as Traditional, Right, Left, Radical, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative and Reactionary<sup>10</sup>. This is evident here that ideologies demand actions, not only observations and analysis which clearly explain their nature and types.

### **Types of ideologies**

Since the discussion is based on modern history of western ideologies therefore we begin with the view that Ideologies in this context have diverse nature. One may be coherent and better articulated than other. However distinction between ideologies is extremely difficult task. All ideologies are subjected to historical and political conditions. Both breed ideas to forecast future better than present. This is vividly clear that ideologies are the outcome of historical and political forces, which bring to social horizon highly sensitive and responsive elites as writer and

leader to project their ideas as a common motive towards better future. This attracts everyone in society and a common political value and belief becomes an ideology with specific name e.g. Capitalism, Socialism, Communism and Fascism. Each ism represents specific historical period. Fascism is the most modern which ever claimed socialism and liberalism but Benito Mussolini's, "The Political and Social Doctrines of Fascism" Hitler's "Mien Kampf" have no comparison with the writings of John Stuart Mill and the works of Karl Marx. It was against Marxism and liberal democracy. An analytical review of Fascism explains that Fascism sought to destroy enemy through radicalism<sup>11</sup>.

On the other side, Marxism with its comprehensiveness is based on Hegelian dialectics, which expresses that clash of conflicting forces within society direct change and progress. Karl Marx extracted that human progress had been subjected to historical materialism because man and society always pass through particular stages of economic and social development. Without economic division of labor, human society had an era of primitive communism but its division resulted into social classes, transition in economic power and political relations. This process induced socialism to diagnose economic and political inequalities in society but technological development, commercialism and industrialization enforced advanced communism to overcome economic and political inequalities through classless society.<sup>12</sup> The canvas of ideologies was painted by the extreme contradictions within capitalism when lassie fair and economic liberalism was replaced with monopolizing means of production. Consequently this resulted in workers demands for decent social existence and finally two opposing forces in capitalism aggravated economic and political crises which shook the very foundation of nation states' political system through

multiple political process in several states with in the basic nature of politico-economic ideologies. In this context now we turn to assess the role and functions of ideologies in political systems.

### **Functions of Ideologies**

Ideologies certainly perform multiple functions in political systems due to their self-consistency, coherency with diverse nature and position. Irrespective of the fact denial and an end of ideology have become fashionable remarks in industrially developed and liberal democratic states political system due to less ideological communication and minimum political conflicts. In USA, Germany, Great Britain and France politics is not concerned with the nature and distribution of powers in their political systems but it is concerned with the ideas, methods and means to increase the general rate of economic growth. In this context the political process is conducted by Republican and Democratic parties in USA, Conservative and Social Democratic parties in Western Europe. This unnoticeable movement in these political systems from one ideology to another does not necessarily mean a denial and decline of an ideology. Similarly the supporters of the end of ideology have confused ideology with revolutionary utopianism<sup>13</sup>.

What we extract here is that there is a popular acceptance of political values which constitute ideological base therefore absence of ideological conflicts in liberal democracies does not mean absence of an ideology because it is the very foundation of all political systems. However few political systems are more ideologically based than others<sup>14</sup>. Further critical observation of citizens' political attitude also reflects the depth of roots and role of an ideology in a political system. The over all function of political ideology is to legitimize the distribution of power in a political system. In all liberal democracies political elites

compete for peoples consent within their common political value as *popular sovereignty* for accommodation and cooperation. In this sense democracy does not mean that the people actually rule in the real sense of the terms, *People* and *Rule*. Democracy means only that the people have an opportunity of accepting or rejecting the men who are to rule them by free competition among political elites for the vote of the electorates. In fact democracy is a set of principles, which seek to legitimize political process within political system<sup>15</sup>. This process clearly continued in socialist political systems since 1917 and every act was legitimized within ideological context e.g. former Soviet Union's invasion in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was justified to defend socialism against internal and external enemies and military occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 was also justified to defend communist ideologues against conservative antagonism. This clearly indicates that ideology justifies and legitimizes political process and actions in all political systems<sup>16</sup>.

Ideologies modify demands in political systems in appropriate manners and provide tools of action related system of ideas to political elites in every political system to varying degree of mass involvement in political process e.g. large scale wars in 20<sup>th</sup> century were characterized to protect democracy, socialism and national integrity against external threats through mass mobilization during 1940s. Nuclear disarmament movement in Great Britain during 1950, anti Vietnam War movement in 1960 in USA, Bloc politics during cold war, US Democratic Party severe criticism of the misdeeds of President Nixon in Watergate Scandal was in-accordance with the party ideology and constitutional norms, British membership in EU was extensively debated in the parliament against bureaucratic threat to representative government and the parliamentary

independence. In all these cases the language of politics was the language of ideology through mass participation to exercise political power<sup>17</sup>. Similarly mass mobilization is a common factor in all political systems for legitimacy and ideological orientations. Therefore ideologies not only ensure political unity and instability but promote one ideological group against another. Likewise ideologies divert attention from internal problems and design a pattern of political culture. Being an instrument of political change, ideologies conduct examination of political process. Now the study turns to answer multiple questions related to how ideologies initiate political change. Why and what is the process of political change?

### **Political Change and Ideologies**

Change is something evolutionary transition and transformation of one into another state of affairs. How, Why and what cause change, is a dilemma for mankind. We change as slowly and swiftly as the Sun rises and falls. The most important is to modify and to respond to the change accurately and to understand the dynamism of change.<sup>18</sup>In the same context political change is a universal phenomenon and ideologies are a mean to explain political change. Diverse political systems register varied degree of political change. This is an outcome of interrelated elements like individuals, social structure and degree of economic development, political institutions and political ideas. The cementing force between them is an ideology, which legitimizes the process of change, and political parties being interpreter of ideology become agents of political change. Here the study discovers multiple factors and features, which transform one political system into another. The features like multi-nationalism is dissolved into nationalism, conservative and



unrepresentative systems change into liberal democratic and socialist, centralized systems are dissolved into decentralized political systems. The factors like, the low level economic development and lack of natural resources, ideological disorientation and war repercussions certainly change political systems into diverse forms<sup>19</sup>.e.g. The citizens of Hapsburg Empire welcomed 1914 war as a catalyst of political change<sup>20</sup>. Russians also replaced Tsarist Empire with Communist Government in 1917. The process of political change continued pre & post World War II in 1945. Several territories were divided and disintegrated into autonomous regions and independent states and political systems passed through transitions and change in Africa, Asia and Europe<sup>21</sup>. The partition of Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947 was the direct impact of the World War II and the political change caused by the ideological orientation as well as nationalism between Hindus and Muslims.

However, the degree of change always depends on the ability of the system and strength of the ideology to accommodate change. Most of the developing political systems are passing through the lowest level of industrialization and economic development. Therefore the concept of political change is now equated with modernization of socio- politico-economic structures to ensure political stability. This optimistic belief in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries created distinction between political change and progress both floated political liberalism and economic determinism<sup>22</sup>.

Out of these ideological dimensions Nations extracted the liberal political institutions and national self-determination as the main pillars of political process in political systems. Most of the developing political systems began as separate entities after 1945 and within sixty-two years of their existence comparison of their political process with Great

Britain, France and USA appears illogical. This must clearly be understood that the process of change is slow, time consuming, evolutionary and depends on the dynamics of the political ideas floating in the society. Further it requires enlightened individuals with intimate relations with agents of political change, better process of political communication, mass oriented political parties with clear manifesto and political goals and change propelling political institutions. What the study clarifies is that political process and stability continues so long as harmony of individual, political institutions and ideology continues in a political system.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes here the brief discussion on an exhaustive theme that like heart and mind in man, ideas and process in a political system ensure existence, strength, stability, motivation and ability to absorb change without violent upheavals. Although there are several sources of politics like family, friends, electronic and print media, books, teachers and politicians but all of them propose ideas which construct a body of concepts, approaches and techniques to increase accuracy in political process within political system for clear understanding of the Political world<sup>23</sup>. In fact political ideas cover a vast terrain of human life like exercise of political power, nature of public political beliefs and values, resolution of conflicts, political competition, scope and boundaries of government's institutions and determination of who gets what, when and how in a political system. Further political ideas establish political belief system and political culture. Both formulate political behavior of the people through affective orientations which generate feelings and emotions e.g. nationality, national symbolism and patriotism. And

gradual flow of history converts political ideas into future ideology that shapes today the World of tomorrow.

### End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> M.Ashley, "The Glorious Revolution of 1688", (London: Mac Millan,1966),pp.17-23.

<sup>2</sup> A.H.Kelly & W.A.Harbinson, "The American Constitution: Its origin and development", (New York: Cliffs,1965),pp.50-51.

<sup>3</sup> D.Scott, "Russian political institutions", (London; Mac Millan,1965),pp.80-90.

<sup>4</sup> Alen R.Ball, "Modern Politics and Government", (London: MacMillan,1978),p.243.

<sup>5</sup> James N.Danziger, "Understanding the Political World", (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman,1991),p.177.

<sup>6</sup> op.cit,p.244.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Scruton, "A Dictionary of Political thought", (New York: Hill & Wang,1982),p.213

<sup>8</sup> Alan Bullock & Oliver Stallybrass (ed), "The harper Dictionary of Modern thought", (New York: Harper & Row,1977),p.289.

<sup>9</sup> Barrie Axford & Gary K.Browning, "Politics: An Introduction", (London: Routledge,1997),p.227.

<sup>10</sup> Leon P.Baradat, "Political Ideologies, their origins and impact", (New Jersey: Prentice Hall,1979),pp.1-29.

<sup>11</sup> Op.cit.p.245. See also Ernst Nolte, "Three faces of Fascism", (New York: Holt ,Rinehart & Winston,1966),pp.10-14; and Eugene Weber, "Varieties of Fascism", (New York: Van Nostrand,1964),p.151.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Funderburk & Robert G. Thobaben, "Political Ideologies", (New York: Harper Collins,1989),pp.14-35.

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- <sup>13</sup> D. Bell, "The End of Ideology", (New York: Rinehart & Winston, 1960), pp. 369-70. See also Earl L. Shaw, "Modern Competing Ideologies", (Lexington, USA: D.C. Heath, 1973).
- <sup>14</sup> W.T. Bluhm, "Ideologies and Attitudes", (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1974), pp. 35-59.
- <sup>15</sup> J.A. Schumpeter, "Capitalism, Socialism, & Democracy", (London: MacMillan, 1954), pp. 273, 284-5.
- <sup>16</sup> Alen R. Ball, "Modern Politics and Government", (London: MacMillan, 1978), p. 249. See also J.M Gilson, "The Soviet Image of Utopia" (Baltimore: Prentice Hall, 1975) and Deutscher, "The Unfinished Revolution", (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 250. See also R. Conquest, "The Great Terror", (London: MacMillan, 1971).
- <sup>18</sup> H.G. Bernetts, "The basic of cultural change", (New York: McGraw Hill, 1953), p-462.
- <sup>19</sup> H. Victor Wiseman, (Ed) "Political Science", (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 1-29.
- <sup>20</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, "The Hapsburg Monarchy 1809-1918", (London: McMillan, 1951), p. 232.
- <sup>21</sup> A. Marwick, "British in the Century of Total War", (London: Oxford Press, 1970), p. 13
- <sup>22</sup> Alen R. Ball, "Modern Politics and Government", (London: MacMillan, 1978), p. 253.
- <sup>23</sup> James N. Danziger, "Understanding the Political World", (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991), pp. 4-16.

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