

Some scholars claim that ideologies do not play an important role in contemporary party politics. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

More than 200 years have passed since the main ideologies emerged in the chaos of The French Revolution and its aftermath. Long history of development of party system and parliamentarism followed. But in what state do we find ideologies in modern times? Some scholars argue that ideologies are almost ‘dead’. In the late XX century Daniel Bell in *The End of Ideologies* (1960) and *Government and Opposition* (1988) claimed that “ideological debate was in decline as a means of understanding society”¹. Francis Fukuyama continued these ideas in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). Nevertheless, new Millennium brought some surprises, and in this essay we would like to prove that ideology is indeed ‘dead’ in party politics of autocracies, but in democracies it still has rather important role.

Before we start, let us explain the structure of the essay. We will explore the given topic in different dimensions: in autocracies and democracies (both consensus and majoritarian), and try to give an answer for each dimension.

According to our research, ideologies do not play major role in party politics in authoritarian regimes. André Bank in *The study of authoritarian diffusion and cooperation: comparative lessons on interests versus ideology, nowadays and in history* (2017) explores cases in Eastern Central Europe, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. The missionary ideologies that inspired people are left in the past and in contemporary autocracies we do not usually see strict ideology, the decision-making is interest-based.² Moreover, in competitive authoritarianism parties act not in an ordinary way. Party manifestos might have little in common with the ideology on the ‘facade’ (e.g. LDPR party in Russia that tends to be ultra-right and nationalistic has ‘leftist’ manifesto – green politics, improvement of free healthcare, stop price increase, etc.). Finally, ideologies can be used as a tool of propaganda and not actually determine party politics (On the 14th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party the Market Socialist Economy was proclaimed).

¹ Harrison, Kevin, and Tony Boyd. “Understanding Political Ideas and Movements,” 2018, 142–43. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137951>.

² Bank, A. (2017). The study of authoritarian diffusion and cooperation: Comparative lessons on interests versus ideology, nowadays and in history. *Democratization*, 24(7), 1345–1357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1312349>

In democracies role of ideology is bigger (and in majoritarian democracies it is bigger than in consensus ones). We would like to begin with exploring ideologies in consensus democracies that we often see in Europe. Roi Zur in the *Stuck in the middle: Ideology, valence and the electoral failures of centrist parties* (2018) argues that centrist parties have reached the peak amount of support and cannot get more votes by moderating its position.³ However, the radical parties that were on the rise in 2014-2016 are now facing major defeats (Germany 2021). It basically means that in consensus democracies radical ideologically-based parties didn't succeed. Meanwhile, differences in party politics of dominant centrist parties are minimal (Usually the contradictions are on just several minor questions e.g. green energy). They indicate the existence of consensus and according to The Hotelling-Downs Model of Political Competition parties will tend to get the median voter and move towards the center.

However, in majoritarian democracies situation is the opposite. In *Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats* (2016) Matt Grossmann, David A. Hopkins argue that in the USA (example of majoritarian democracy) the Republican Party is a strong conservative ideological movement, while Democrats are 'fundamentally a group coalition'⁴. In this case Republicans stay on their conservative positions in order to save their electorate, simultaneously Democrats are trying to gather everyone who is not satisfied with the Republicans. Therefore, moving to the center is impossible for both parties as they will lose their basic electorate, so that polarizes the society. We can observe the similar situation in Poland (PiS against the coalition) and other majoritarian democracies.

Answering the given question, in the authoritarian regimes ideology indeed does not play important role in party politics. However, in democracies the situation is more difficult. On the one hand, in consensus democracies parties tend to lay in the center and ideologies influence only minor aspects in party politics, on the other hand, in majoritarian democracies the fight between conservative ideology and anti-conservative coalition in most cases determines the party politics.

³ Zur, R. (2019). Stuck in the middle: Ideology, Valence and the electoral failures of centrist parties. *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(2), 706–723. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123419000231>

⁴ Grossmann, M., & Hopkins, D. A. (2016). Introduction. Two different types of parties. In *Asymmetric politics: Ideological Republicans and group interest Democrats* (pp. 3–4). essay, Oxford University Press.

Bibliography

- Bank, A. (2017). The study of authoritarian diffusion and cooperation: Comparative lessons on interests versus ideology, nowadays and in history. *Democratization*, 24(7), 1345–1357.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1312349>
- Grossmann, M., & Hopkins, D. A. (2016). Introduction. Two different types of parties. In *Asymmetric politics: Ideological Republicans and group interest Democrats* (pp. 3–4). essay, Oxford University Press.
- Harrison, K., & Boyd, T. (2018). Understanding political ideas and movements, 142–143. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137951>
- Zur, R. (2019). Stuck in the middle: Ideology, Valence and the electoral failures of centrist parties. *British Journal of Political Science*, 51(2), 706–723.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123419000231>