Ideologies

**1. What is an ideology?**

DEF: *belief system that society can be improved by following certain doctrines* *commitments to change political systems*

Ideologies are often based on political and economic theories but simplified and popularized to sell to mass audiences, build political movements and win elections.

Ideologies never precisely work the way their advocated intended and they often collapse in the face of reality.

**2. Liberalism**

**2.1 Classic Liberalism**

DEF: *ideology founded by Adam Smith to keep government of the economy, which later became U.S conservatism. Society should be as free as possible from government interference.*

In 1776 Adam Smith published “the wealth of nations” and founded classic laissez-faire economics: he argued that the true wealth of nations is not the amount of gold a country owns but the amount of goods and services their people produce. Doing so, he was refuting mercantilism, according to which a nation’s treasury determined its wealth.

Smith’s main point is that government interference retards growth: monopolies make the economy stagnate while by getting the government out of the economy you promote prosperity. He also said that the absence of economy will not lead to anarchy because the market will regulate itself since the individuals pursuing their self-interest micro adjusts the economy without the need of government.

Government should also be absent from religion, press and free speech.

In the late 19th century liberalism slip into modern liberalism and conservativism

**2.2 Modern liberalism**

DEF: *ideology favouring government intervention to correct economic and social problems*

By the late 19th century, it became clear that the market was not completely self-regulating (the invisible hand), and competition was imperfect and tended to promote monopolies.

Thomas Hill Green rethought liberalism: he said that that its goal was a free society but there were cases in which economic development takes away that freedom. In these cases, it is the government responsibility to step in, since this would be a case of government protecting people and not restricting them: the government must step in to guarantee the freedom to live at an adequate level. This implies heavier taxed on the rich.

Ex: American liberalism of Obama, Roosevelt, and Wilson.

**3. Conservativism**

DEF: *ideology of keeping systems largely unchanged*

Edmund Burke agreed with Smith that a free market was the best economic system buy he disagreed to the way liberal ideas were applied in France by revolutionists, he said that their liberalism had turned into radicalism under Rousseau’s influence.

According to Burke liberals place too much confidence in human reason since people are only partly rational, they also have irrational features, and to contain these societies has evolved institutions and traditions. To exclude these from people’s lives would mean to allow chaos and tyranny to take over.

Burke concluded that not all institution that currently exist can be bad, the best ones should be preserved, and the bad ones should be changed gradually to allow people to adjust.

Burke’s contributions:

1. He helped to highlight the irrational nature of human behaviour.
2. He thought that institutions are like living things that grow and adapt over time.
3. He highlighted how revolutions end badly because of how societies cannot be immediately modified according to human wishes.

**3.1 Modern Conservativism**

Liberals who stayed loyal to Smith’s original doctrine are today called conservatives.

Milton Friedman helped spreading Smith’s ideas in the US, arguing that the free market was the best option and that government intervention only causes confusion.

Ex: Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US (he thought that government was not the solution it was the problem)

Modern conservativism worships markets even more than Adam Smith: he admitted that markets are not completely self-regulating, while modern conservationists believe that markets are honest and self-correcting, or at least more than government regulation. This belief is called “market fundamentalism”.

Ex: this can be seen in the privatization American health care system

Modern Conservativism is also focused on tradition and especially religion.

Ex: American conservatives believe in prayer in public schools, outlaw abortion and same-sex marriage, and support private and church-related schools.

Modern Conservativism also oppose special rights for women and minority groups since everyone should have the same rights.

“The Road to Serfdom” is a book written by economist and philosopher Friedrich von Hayek, in which the author warns of the danger of tyranny that inevitably results from government control of economic decision-making through central planning. He further argues that the abandonment of individualism and classical liberalism inevitably leads to a loss of freedom, the creation of an oppressive society, the tyranny of a dictator, and the serfdom of the individual.

According to him liberty is a “policy which deliberately adopts competition, markets and prices as its ordering principles”, hence markets guarantee individual liberty, while the interference of the state in markets disrupted the operation of liberty and started society on the road to serfdom

**4. Socialism**

In the 19th century liberalism dominated but critics saw a growing divergence between rich and poor and that few reforms would not be enough, they wished to overthrow the capitalist system.

Karl Marx in his “Capital” offered an analysis on why capitalism would be overthrown by the proletariat, and then socialism would have followed, a just productive society without class distinction. Later, in a stage where industrial production would be extremely high the society would turn into communism, the perfect society, with no private property or government, which is an instrument of class domination.

Marx never specified what socialism would look like, so various socialist thinkers developed their own version.

Ex. this ranged from welfarism of social-democratic parties, to anarcho-syndicalism, to Lenin’s, Stalin’s, Trotsky’s, Mao’s, and Tito’s versions.

**4.1 Social Democracy**

DEF: *Social democracy is a political, social, and economic ideology that supports economic and social interventions to promote social justice within the framework of a liberal-democratic polity and capitalist economy, as well as a policy regime involving a commitment to representative and participatory democracy, measures for income redistribution and regulation of the economy in the general interest and welfare state provisions, not state ownership of industry.*

Eduard Bernstein in “Evolutionary Socialism”, pointed out the gains that the working class was receiving and argued that Marx had been wrong about the collapse of capitalism and revolution from the proletariat. He supported the idea that reforms that won concrete benefits for the working class could also lead to socialism (doing so he can be considered a revisionist: someone that changes an ideology or view of history)

Social democrats abandoned state ownership of industry and started to use welfare measures to improve living conditions (to the point that social democracies have become welfare states – welfarism)

Weaknesses of social democracies:

1. They are awfully expensive since to pay for welfare measures taxes rise (ex. Denmark and Sweden)
2. The rise in taxes takes away the liberty to make lifestyle choices.

Ex: Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in the US

Social democracy thus aims to create the conditions for capitalism to lead to greater democratic, egalitarian and solidaristic outcomes; and is often associated with the set of socioeconomic policies that became prominent in Northern and Western Europe, particularly the Nordic model in the Nordic countries, during the second half of the 20th century.

**4.2 Communism**

DEF: Marxist theory merged with Leninist organization into a totalitarian party

IMPERIALISM:

DEF: *amassing of colonial empires, mostly by European powers; pejorative in Marxist terms*

Russian intellectual did not appreciate tzarism and saw Marxism to overthrow the system even if Marxism was meant to be applied in advanced capitalist countries and not Russia, where capitalism was just beginning, but Lenin made the theory fit the country.

He took Hobson’s theory of economic imperialism that stated that capitalism survived longer than what Marx thought because of imperialism. Lenin added that imperialism was growing unevenly, there were countries that were highly developed and other were just starting. This is where revolution had the most potential, and from revolutions in less developed countries more powerful ones would follow. Given that developed countries were depended on colonies, once cut off developed countries and their capitalism would fall. (ex: according to Lenin World War I was the example of the collision of imperialist interests)

Lenin basically made Marxist theories shift to a global scale.

ORGANIZATION:

Lenin’s focus lay in organization: the Russian socialist party had to be small, secretive, and organized under central command.

In 1903 the Social Democratic Party split in Bolshevik (Lenin’s faction) and Menshevik, which later became the Communist party.

1917 the Bolshevik took control and founded the Communist International (or Cominterm), the new international movement under Moscow’s control for all true socialists.

All socialist parties split into Social Democratic and Communist parties. In 1991 the Soviet System collapsed.

MAOISM:

DEF: *extreme form of communism, featuring guerrilla warfare and periodic upheavals.*

In the 1930s, Mao Zedong said that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had to be based on poor peasants and guerrilla warfare to break with Stalin’s leadership; the party seized power in China in 1949.

Mao started a series of reforms among which feature overnight industrialization (Great Leap Forward), the destruction of bureaucratic authority (the Proletarian Cultural Revolution) and border fighting with the Soviet Union.

After Mao’s death China’s leader moved away from this kind of extremism that did not benefit the economy

Some groups stayed Maoist – ex: Cambodia Khmer Rouge, India’s Naxalites

TITOISM:

DEF: *moderate, decentralized, partially market form of communism, can be considered a middle way between capitalism and socialism*

Under Tito Yugoslavia reformed their system, basing it on decentralization, debureaucratization, worker self-management and the effort to try and find a middle ground between a market and a controlled economy.

After Tito’s death in 1980 Yugoslavia came apart and by the next decade many new nation states were born.

**5. Nationalism**

DEF: *a people’s heightened sense of cultural, historical, and territorial identity, unity and greatness often born out of occupation and repression by foreigners.*

Nationalism arises when a population perceives an enemy to despise, since being ruled by others is the worst thing for a nation (ex. Britain, France and the Netherlands on Indians, Algerians, and Indonesians)

The first instance of nationalism came in the Renaissance when monarchs proclaimed their absolute power and the greatness of their kingdom. Nationalism was born with the French revolution, based on the French people destined to free the rest of Europe. With Napoleon’s conquests all over Europe, the conquered grew to hate the conquerors and became nationalistic as they struggled to tolerate French troops in their countries (the sentiment of resentment is essential in nationalism). In the 20th century nationalism spread from Europe to developing countries too.

Nationalism can lead to wars and economic isolation but at the same time, economic growth needs foreign investment and world trade.

In the 19th century intellectuals started to think of nation as the ultimate human value

Ex: most of all in Germany and Italy with

Mazzini said that one achieved true freedom by subordinating oneself to the nation.

REGIONAL NATIONALISM:

Regional nationalism aims at breaking up existing nations into what its supporters argue are true nations, and it is based on the same hatred of being ruled by others.

Ex: Quebecois in Canada, Basques in Spain, Tibetans in China, Scots in Britain.

**5.1 Fascism**

DEF: *extreme form of nationalism with elements of racism, socialism, and militarism*

In Italy and Germany nationalism grew into fascism. One of the main elements of fascism is members in uniform: they crave military structure and discipline.

Italy was overwhelmed by discontent after World War I, and Mussolini grouped people who wanted to end democracy and political parties to impose a central authority, since they hated disorder a wanted strong leadership. In 1924 Italy became a one-party state with Mussolini as Duce; the system was characterized by a façade of perfection, but fascism was a mess.

Hitler in Germany copied aspects of Italian Fascism and added racism to it. Like Italy, Germany was frustrated for World War I outcome and the Versailles Treaty. Hitler declared the superiority of Germans as a distinct and superior race, bearers of civilization. They were being subjugated by Jews, communism, capitalism, and roman Catholicism.

Hitler was named chancellor and with the National Socialist German Workers Party he began to conquer the Slavic lands of Europe as Lebensraum (living space).

Other examples of political movement that can be confused with fascism:

1. Francisco Franco in Spain: he cannot be considered fascist since he tried to minimize mass political involvement, he was a traditional authoritarian.
2. Getulio Vargas in Brazil: he only borrowed some fascist rhetoric.
3. Ku Klux Klan in the US: they strongly oppose the power of the national government.

**6. Ideology in our day**

**6.2 The collapse of Communism**

By the 1980s the communist ideology had elapsed. West Europeans embraced Eurocommunism, where they renounced dictatorship and state ownership of industry. Capitalism had been thriving in the US, Europe, and Asia.

In the late 1980s Gorbachev approached a season of reforms to revitalize the Soviet society, which only caused more discontent:

1. Glasnost – media openness
2. Perestroika – economic restructuring
3. Demokratizatzia – democratization

In 1989 non-communist parties took over, favouring the birth of new movement and parties. In 1991 the URSS ceased to exist.

**6.3 Neoconservatism**

DEF: *US ideology emerged in the 1970s of former liberals turning to conservative causes and methods*

Neocons said that the Democratic Party had moved too far left with unrealistic ideas on domestic reforms a pacifist foreign policy. They had reacted against the Great Society programs introduced by Johnson in the mid-1960s that aimed to wipe out poverty and discrimination. Neocons spoke negatively of the consequences of liberal programs and they are also against Affirmative Action, which according to them gave minorities preferential treatment in hiring.

**6.4 Libertarianism**

DEF: *US ideology emerged in the 1960s in favour of shrinking all government power in favour of individual freedom*

Libertarians wished to return to Adam Smith, with no government interference in anything: they oppose subsidies, bureaucracies, taxes, intervention overseas, and a big government itself.

They have been criticized for their worship of unregulated markets, which lead to the 2008 crisis.

**6.5 Feminism**

DEF: *ideology that was revitalized in the 60s and 70s of psychological, political, and economic equality for women*

Feminists denounced women’s position in society and said that the root of the problem is psychological since men and women are forced into gender roles, which lead to gender differences which are learned and taught by a patriarchal society.

Politically the movement did not archive all its goals: The Equal Rights Amendment failed to be ratified since antifeminists argued that it would take away women’s privileges and protection under the law.

**6.6 Environmentalism**

DEF: *ideology to save an endangered nature through regulation and lifestyle changes that emerged in industrialized countries.*

Economic development was not a good revenue to endanger natural resources and the disasters that followed proved it: Chernobyl, Love Canal, and Three Mile Island.

Consumption patterns and lifestyle choices need to change to conserve the earth’s resources, and to help political partied were formed: the Citizen Party, the Greens etc, which were the most successful in Germany and Sweden.

**7. Is ideology finished?**

In the 60s Daniel Bell said that ideologies were almost over thanks to the failure of tyrannis and the rise of the welfare state.

In 1989 Fukuyama argued that the ideological debate ended with the victory of capitalistic democracy, and also that history itself could end in the sense that free humans would live in free humans and the idea of ideology would come to an end in the sense of the struggle of great ideas.

Today’s new ideologies:

1. Islamism
2. Authoritarian capitalism in China