CHAPTER 5

Traditional Western Ideologies

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this chapter we make the case that no ideology can be understood outside the economic, social, and political environment in which it emerged. The focus of this chapter is primarily Europe, since all the ideologies we will examine in this chapter were shaped by the European Enlightenment and were created by Europeans. Liberalism, socialism, nationalism, and anarchism, as we will see, reflected key Enlightenment

▲ The statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, located at Marx-Engels-Forum in Berlin, Germany (© Giulio Ercolani/ Alamy Stock Photo).

principles, while conservatism and fascism resisted them. Almost all of the ideologies reviewed in this chapter have had an extraordinary impact on the development of world politics in the last two centuries, and it is fair to say that the world would have been a very different place had they not existed.

What Is an Ideology?

This chapter and the next will focus on political ideologies. Ideologies are central to this book because they help shape the political landscape, both domestic and international. Many of the themes we will encounter will probably be familiar to you, because each ideology consists of a set of political ideas. Liberalism, for instance, centres on the concept of liberty, whereas socialism centres on the concept of equality. In this chapter we will examine traditional ideologies associated with the European **Enlightenment** (see Box 5.1). Liberalism, socialism, nationalism, and anarchism all emerged as aspects of Enlightenment thought, whereas conservatism and fascism tried to challenge its assumptions. In the next chapter we will examine more contemporary ideologies that challenge the claims of the traditional ideologies outlined in this chapter.

The term *ideology* was coined at the time of the French Revolution by Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), who used it to refer to a science of ideas that could be discovered in the same way that truths are discovered in the natural sciences. Others, however, soon recognized the normative character of ideology. For some the word itself has a negative meeting, and an *ideologue* is someone with an uncompromising devotion to a certain set of ideas even if they have little practical use. An ideology is a set of ideas designed to describe the existing political order, present a vision of what the ideal political order should look like, and, if necessary, lay a means to get from what exists to what we want things to be. An ideology therefore contains empirical, semantic, and normative elements.

Ideologies are often action oriented: They seek to promote a particular social and political order for which they urge people to struggle. The twentieth century has been described as the age of ideologies because of the havoc wreaked during it by regimes based on two particular ideological traditions—communism and fascism. However, it would be more appropriate to say that the twentieth century was the age of ideologies with which liberalism profoundly disagreed. The liberal critiques of fascism and communism as

KEY CONCEPT BOX 5.1

Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an intellectual and cultural movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that emphasized the application of reason in the search for knowledge and human progress. It was both a cause and an effect of the decline in the authority of religion that accompanied it. A notable critic of the Enlightenment within political philosophy was the British conservative philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797), who railed against what many have seen as its high point, the French Revolution (Burke, 1790/1968).

ideologies reflect a tendency among some liberals to regard liberalism itself as somehow above the ideological fray, which is not actually true.

Additionally, all ideologies have different strands or schools, and sometimes there is considerable overlap between one ideology and another. Ideologies are, then, in the words of Festenstein and Kenny (2005, p. 4), "internally pluralistic, contested, complex, and overlapping."

It's also important to note that ideologies reflect as well as shape the social and historical circumstances in which they develop. For example, since the nineteenth century the two most influential ideologies have been liberalism and socialism. It was no accident that these ideologies emerged during the Industrial Revolution and reached their height in the nineteenth century. In the first place, both liberalism and socialism reflected the optimism of the time, when it was thought that there was nothing that human beings could not understand rationally and achieve politically and economically. Second, liberalism and socialism became dominant ideologies because they were associated with the new social groups created by the Industrial Revolution. Liberalism was largely promoted by the industrial middle class; socialism, by the industrial working class.

KEY POINTS

- Traditional ideologies were shaped by the Enlightenment.
- Ideologies are action oriented.
- It is usually possible to identify the core concepts of an ideology, but all ideologies combine a variety of concepts and therefore their meanings are disputed.
- Ideologies reflect as well as shape the social and historical circumstances in which they exist.

Liberalism

Liberalism is an important ideology because it has been the dominant political tradition in the West for many centuries. We have already encountered various facets of liberalism throughout this book, and many of the key Western political thinkers—Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, Mill, Rawls, and Nozick—are in the liberal tradition.

The Historical Development of Liberalism

The origins of liberalism are often traced to the rise of a capitalist political economy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, during which time theorists developed a philosophical defence of private property. The individualistic political philosophy of Hobbes and Locke is crucial here (Macpherson, 1962). Liberalism is difficult to pin down, not least because of its longevity and the range of forms it has taken. *Liberal* has been used to describe parties of the right, such as in Australia, where Tony Abbott and now Malcolm Turnbull have led a Liberal government since 2013, and the centre-left, such as the Liberal Party of Canada, which governed Canada for much of the twentieth century. In some countries it is associated with a free market; in others, most notably the United States, with state intervention. In the United States, Republicans often use the word as a form of derision against Democrats.

Classical liberalism draws in particular on the economic theory of Adam Smith (1723–1790) and the social theory of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Emphasizing limitation of the state's role, it calls for the state to do little apart from ensuring internal and external security and enforcing private property rights. This view is partly justified on the grounds that the market is the most effective means of meeting human needs. There is also a moral dimension in that a limited state maximizes individual freedom and rewards those who work hardest.

See Chapter 20, p. 408, for a discussion of a liberal political economy.

Classical liberalism was challenged toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the extent of poverty was beginning to be recognized and socialism was emerging as an alternative. In response to these challenges, liberal thinkers such as Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), Leonard Hobhouse (1864–1929), and John Hobson (1858–1940) called for a **new liberalism** emphasizing social reform. New liberals saw a more positive role for the state in correcting the inequities of the market. Social liberals argued that, far from reducing liberty, state intervention actually increased it by expanding the opportunities for individuals to achieve their goals. The new liberalism influenced the direction of Liberal Party politics in the United Kingdom; the British Liberal government elected in 1906 introduced a range of social-reform measures, including old-age pensions.

The new liberalism dominated the political landscape for much of the twentieth century, although not always under the "liberal" name; in Britain, for example, its main vehicle was the social democratic Labour Party. In the 1970s, however, a revised version of classical liberalism emerged to challenge it under the guise of the New Right, and right-wing governments, particularly in Britain, the United States, and Canada, were elected on platforms that reflected, in part, the classical liberal agenda. The academic support for this popular movement was provided by thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and Robert Nozick.

See Chapter 4, p. 81, for Nozick's critique of Rawls's theory of justice.

Liberal Thought

One of the key questions about liberal ideology is the degree to which the two types of liberalism identified above are compatible. Arguably, the core meaning of liberalism is found in the concepts of liberty, tolerance, individualism, and a particular kind of equality. Liberty is *the* concept at the centre of liberal thought. For some liberal thinkers liberty is an intrinsic good; for others, such as John Stuart Mill, it is a means to an end: Its value lies in the possibilities for self-development it produces.

The classical liberal tradition emphasizes negative liberty: individual freedom from external constraints, including constraints imposed by the state. The new liberal tradition emphasizes positive liberty: freedom to pursue self-development, which is assumed to require state intervention to protect rights, promote equality of opportunity, and so on. Critics of the new liberalism charge that in shifting the emphasis from the individual to society, it has abandoned "true" liberalism. Advocates of the new liberalism respond that liberty cannot be maximized without state intervention to create the necessary conditions.

See Chapter 4, p. 74, for a discussion of the distinction between positive and negative liberty.

Central to liberty is a focus on the individual. In the social contract tradition of Hobbes and Locke, the individual exists before society is created. The notion of rights is prominent in liberal thought precisely because of the centrality of the individual. Individuals should be protected against society and the state. At its libertarian extreme, individualism denies that the state has the right to intervene in any aspect of the individual's life. As we have seen, however, even classical liberalism sees some role for the state; thus extreme libertarianism is closer to anarchist than to liberal thought (see the discussion of anarchism later in this chapter).

See Chapter 1, p. 32, for a discussion of the liberal social contract tradition.

The liberal focus on the individual reflects the belief that individuals are rational and hence able to determine their own best interests, which they will always pursue. Thus, in the economic realm, individuals are best left to their own devices as consumers and producers. The "hidden hand" of the market will ensure that economic utility is achieved. The pre-eminence of the individual in liberal thought downgrades the community from a unified entity to an aggregate of individuals with competing interests and values. This distinction between the community and the individual is the source of the modern debate between liberals and communitarians. Communitarian thinkers criticize the liberal social contract tradition for basing its principles on a notion of humans in a pre-social state. For communitarians, political principles must be derived from the actual societies that provide identity and meaning for individuals.

See Chapter 1, p. 35, for a discussion of communitarianism.

The liberal approach to equality is distinctive. Liberals hold individuals to be of equal value but reject any notion that outcomes should therefore be equal. Rather, liberals look to equality of opportunity to ensure fairness on the principle that if individuals start from the same position, then they will be rewarded according to their merit. Of course, the free market does not allow for genuine equality of opportunity, because individuals don't start out in life from the same position. Thus it might be argued that the state intervention advocated by the new liberals actually makes equality of opportunity more of a reality. The introduction of free education and healthcare, in particular, has helped to equalize life chances.

KEY POINTS

- Liberalism is the dominant political tradition in Western countries.
- Liberalism has two main strands, classical and "new" liberalism, or social reforming.
- The core concept of liberalism is liberty, with the classical tradition emphasizing negative liberty and the social reforming tradition emphasizing positive liberty.
- The priority attributed to the individual in liberal thought entails a downgrading of the community.
- Liberals advocate equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome.

Socialism

The word *socialism* first appeared in print in 1827. Socialism as an ideology developed with the emergence of an industrial working class in the course of the Industrial Revolution. Although it has been closely associated with working-class parties, socialism differs from trade unionism in that it has much broader goals, focused not just on workers but on the whole of society, which it seeks to transform in co-operative and egalitarian directions. Somewhat ironically, many of the advocates of socialism have come from the middle classes, and they have always faced some hostility from working-class organizations.

Historical Development

Although the pivotal figure in the historical development of socialism is Karl Marx, three pre-Marxian thinkers—Claude-Henri Saint-Simon (1760–1825), Charles Fourier (1772–1837), and Robert Owen (1771–1858)—are usually seen as the founders of socialism. Marx

considered these thinkers utopian in that they had no practical vision of how political change would come about. Marx, by contrast, developed a "scientific" theory according to which socialism was not only ethically desirable but historically inevitable.

Marx's ideas have had a huge impact on world politics, although they may seem less relevant now than they did during the Cold War (see Box 5.2). Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks revised them to suit Russia's circumstances, and after the Russian Revolution in 1917 they established the Soviet state on the foundations provided by Marxist ideas.

KEY QUOTE BOX 5.2

Marx's Vision of Communism

Marx wrote very little about what a future communist society would look like. In the *Communist Manifesto*, however, he did say this:

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all the production has been concentrated in the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. . . . If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1976, p. 105)

AFP/Getty Images

PHOTO 5.1 | Marxist leader Biman Bose addresses a press conference in Kolkata, India, in May 2011 following the defeat of the world's longest-serving democratically elected communist government. The Left Front had governed the state of West Bengal for 34 years.

Thereafter world socialism was divided between two camps: communism, centring on the "Third International" of world communist organizations, and social democracy.

See Chapter 1, p. 27, for a discussion of Marxist ideas on the state.

Key Socialist Principles

Despite considerable debate between different types of socialists, a number of core principles remain more or less consistent. The first is a *generally optimistic view of* human nature. Socialists tend to see human nature as capable of being shaped by social, economic, and political circumstances. Whereas liberals and conservatives regard human beings as self-seeking and individualistic, socialists believe that those characteristics are socially conditioned and can be changed through co-operation, fellowship, and compassion.

The second core socialist principle is *equality*. Unlike liberals, socialists advocate equality of outcome, because they understand inequality to be the result of different positions in a social structure rather than differences in ability; education is a classic example, because it is heavily influenced by social class. Whereas liberals consider inequality to be a necessary incentive, socialists believe that human nature can be moulded to the point where individuals would be willing to work for the good of society even in the absence of material incentives.

The third core principle of socialism is *community*. There is an emphasis on co-operation and collective rather than individual goals. Community is linked to the other two core socialist values in that common ownership and equality support communal values.

Utopianism and Authoritarianism

Many liberals and conservatives suggest that the socialist vision is utopian, unrealistic, and unrealizable. According to this argument, the ideal socialist society, in which human beings can achieve genuine **emancipation** and fulfillment as members of a community, demands too much of its citizens. Such a society might be acceptable if all its effects were benign, but the egalitarianism it demands results in an **authoritarian** state that must continually intervene to prevent different levels of talent and effort from changing the egalitarian balance of society (Popper, 1962).

The overbearing Soviet state was seen as a direct product of socialist ideas. Joseph Stalin killed millions of his own people during his decades in power, and later Soviet leaders showed little respect for human rights. Indeed, Canada officially recognizes that Stalinist Russia committed genocide against the Ukrainian people in a series of human-induced famines from 1932–3. This is known as the Holodomor and resulted in the deaths of between 3 and 7 million people (*The Economist*, 2012). Thirteen other countries also recognize the Holodomor as genocide. Fortunately, Stalin's excesses were not reproduced in Western Europe, where social democracy, in part based on socialist ideas, never became authoritarian. Here it draws from liberalism as much as it does from Marxism and often has an explicitly religious dimension; see Box 5.3.

KEY POINTS

- Socialist thought is dominated by the work of Karl Marx, who described his socialism as scientific as opposed to the utopian variety of the socialist thinkers who preceded him.

Continued

- In the early twentieth century, socialism divided into two camps, with the communists on one side and the revisionists (later social democrats) on the other.
- To classify different varieties of socialism, it is useful to distinguish between means and ends.
- Core socialist principles include an optimistic view of human nature, equality of outcome, and community and co-operation.
- Some liberal and conservative theorists argue that socialism is utopian and has authoritarian tendencies. They point to Stalin's long time in power as an example.

BIOGRAPHY BOX 5.3

Tommy Douglas (1904–1986)

Tommy Douglas is regarded as the father of the modern Canadian welfare state. A Baptist minister, he combined religious conviction with a dedication to social justice. He was among the founders of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1932, and after 17 years as premier of Saskatchewan (1944–61), during which he introduced Canada's first universal healthcare system, he was elected to lead the CCF's successor, the New Democratic Party, on its founding in 1961. Douglas saw himself as a champion of working families.

Barry Philip/*Toronto Star* via Getty Images

PHOTO 5.2 | Tommy Douglas fires up a crowd in 1963.

Conservatism

Elements of conservative thought can be found throughout history. Indeed, Plato, who defended the rule of the intellectual elite—the "philosopher kings"—can be regarded as the first conservative thinker. However, it was as a response to the Enlightenment that conservative thought gained a popular following. Where liberalism and socialism promoted the progressive and rationalistic values of the Enlightenment, **conservatism** provides a negative response to it. The classic text here is Edmund Burke's attack on the French Revolution of 1789, first published in 1790 (see Box 5.4).

Conservative political movements have not been ideologically uniform. In much of Europe they have historically been anti-liberal and reactionary, whereas in Britain conservatism has been tinged with liberalism. The nineteenth-century British Conservative Party was notable for the social reforming administrations of Robert Peel and Benjamin Disraeli. After 1945, the Conservative Party largely accepted the dominance of social democratic ideas until the 1970s, when it came heavily under the influence of the New Right. A similar shift to the right was noticeable in North America with the election of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Brian Mulroney in Canada.

See Chapter 1, p. 29, for a discussion of the New Right theory of the state.

With its emphasis on the loosening of state controls over the free market, the New Right had more in common with classical liberalism than with conservatism. Certainly, the strongly ideological character of Margaret Thatcher's leadership in Britain ran against the pragmatism of conservative thought. However, the New Right also promoted a number of traditional conservative values—law and order, respect for authority, patriotism and civic virtue—and the Thatcher government was prepared to use the state to enforce them. This ideological mix was described by one commentator as a combination of "the free economy and the strong state" (Gamble, 1994).

BIOGRAPHY BOX 5.4

Edmund Burke (1729–1797)

Burke was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1729. After studying at Trinity College he moved to England in 1750 where he qualified as a lawyer before settling on a career in politics. He became a Member of Parliament in 1765.

Burke's fame came from his writing and speeches on important political issues of his day. He is best known for his vitriolic *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, but he also wrote and spoke on the British Constitution as well as Britain's relations with India and the North American colonies. The fact that he opposed the French Revolution but supported the American Revolution and the Indian opposition to British colonial rule has been much discussed.

Some put this apparent contradiction down to a fear that the French Revolution threatened the emerging capitalist class in Britain. Others argue that there was no inconsistency since Burke was applying his political principles in a logical way. He opposed the French revolutionaries because they were overthrowing an established order on the grounds of abstract rational principles. But he supported the American colonists because they were upholding long-held traditions against British encroachment.

Conservative Thought

Foremost among conservative beliefs is an *aversion to rationalism*, which was very much a product of the Enlightenment. It celebrated the ability of human beings to construct societies on the basis of rational principles such as—in the case of France—"liberty, equality, and fraternity." There was no limit to the progress possible in human societies. For Michael Oakeshott (1901–1990), a notable twentieth-century conservative, a rationalist "stands . . . for independence of mind on all occasions, for thought free from obligation to any authority save the authority of reason" (1962, p. 1).

It was the rationalist character of the French Revolution that Burke so savagely attacked. In trying to create a new society based on abstract principles, the French revolutionaries had destroyed traditions and institutions that had evolved over centuries. For Burke and conservatives in general, the social and political world is too complex to be explained in catch phrases: far better to rely on tried and tested traditions, which reflect the collective wisdom of a society gained over many generations.

A number of other conservative positions come from this anti-rationalist stance. First, the conservative model of society is organic rather than mechanical. Society cannot be taken apart and rearranged like the parts of a machine. Rather, it is a complex organism composed of a multitude of interdependent parts. Thus changing one part may have an unpredictable and undesirable impact on other parts. Burke is not saying that change is impossible: only that it should be gradual and moderate, and care must be taken to preserve what is valuable. There is an assumption here that what exists has value and works for the well-being of society.

A second conservative characteristic, related to anti-rationalism, is a tendency to resist change. Conservatives don't believe that we can fully understand our contemporary social and political environment. At the very least, the collective wisdom developed over centuries is preferable to the abstract reasoning of a few: We should stick with what we know. The same skepticism regarding human capacities is reflected in the conservative *advocacy of hierarchy*. As Plato recognized, effective self-government is a myth. Some people are more capable of governing than others. This is the reason behind Burke's well-known argument justifying the right of Members of Parliament to retain their autonomy from their constituents.

Social and Cultural Conservatism

Many conservatives are also anxious to preserve traditional values against the threats posed by an increasingly global culture (see Box 5.5). The desire to cling to the past is an important ingredient in social and cultural conservatism. Thus in the United States, "values voters" support candidates who promise to maintain traditional moral values. Many conservatives, such as former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, argue that religion needs to play a more important role in social morality. Secularism is condemned as a dangerous, amoral trend that will fragment society and reduce social harmony. The "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" principle resonates with many conservatives, who find little wrong with society as it is and are wary of any change, even when it is necessary to address serious problems in society. An early Canadian example was the 1891 Conservative campaign poster featuring the country's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, and the slogan "The old flag, the old policy, the old leader." Conservatives argue that "new" and "different" do not necessarily mean "better." What is tried and true is often worth preserving, if only because it is what many people are comfortable with.

CASE STUDY 5.5

Canadian Social Liberalism versus American Conservatism

In 2003, the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien refused to join the Bush administration in invading Iraq. In an open letter to US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy contrasted what his left-of-centre Liberal government felt were Canada's priorities with the priorities of the conservative American administration:

> If we're going to spend money . . . it will be on daycare and health programs, and even on more foreign aid and improved defence. Sure, that doesn't match the gargantuan, multi-billion-dollar deficits that your government blithely runs up fighting a "liberation war" in Iraq, laying out more than half of all weapons expenditures in the world, and giving massive tax breaks to the top one per cent of your population while cutting food programs for poor children. Just chalk that up to a different sense of priorities about what a national government's role should be when there isn't a prevailing mood of manifest destiny. (Axworthy, 2005)

At a theoretical level, the differences between Canadian and American political cultures were explored at length by the American scholar Seymour Martin Lipset. In *Continental Divide* (1990), for example, he drew out distinctions between Tory and Liberal traditions in the two countries:

> One was Whig and classically liberal or libertarian—doctrines that emphasize distrust of the state, egalitarianism, and populism—reinforced by a voluntaristic and congregational religious tradition. The other was Tory and conservative in the British and European sense—accepting of the need for a strong state, for respect for authority, for deference —and endorsed by hierarchically organized religions that supported and were supported by the state. (p. 2)

Critics who found Lipset's argument reductionist might have felt vindicated two decades later, when the United States elected Barack Obama, a left-of-centre Democrat, while Canada elected Stephen Harper, a right-of-centre Conservative. Clearly, political cultures are neither homogeneous nor unchanging.

KEY POINTS

- Conservatism is a reaction to the Enlightenment tradition of political thought.
- The New Right has liberal as well as conservative elements.
- The underlying characteristics of conservatism are an aversion to rationality, an organic view of society, skepticism regarding human capacities, and a preference for hierarchy.
- Social and cultural conservatism tends to be suspicious of change and prefers the status quo to the uncertainty of new and unexplored policy options.

Neoconservatism

In the United States, **neoconservatism** became very influential during the presidency of George W. Bush (2001–9), and there is a direct link between neoconservative ideas and the 2003 invasion of Iraq (MacDonald, 2009). It is useful to outline the differences and similarities between traditional conservatives and neoconservatives, as these groups are sometimes confused. There are overlaps, certainly, but also some important distinctions. The first major difference, as the prominent neoconservative Irving Kristol argued, is that most neoconservatives started out on the left. They were "liberals mugged by reality," who began as Democrats and gravitated toward the Republicans, particularly in the late 1970s under Jimmy Carter's presidency. Moreover, neoconservative policies rarely reflected conservative values such as "tradition, ritual, hierarchy, small government, fiscal austerity, devotion to place, [and] homage to the past" (Bacevich, 2005, pp. 70–1).

Kristol defines American neoconservatism with reference to four main principles. First, "patriotism is a natural and healthy sentiment and should be encouraged by both private and public institutions"; there is something morally wrong with those who cast aspersions on their own country. Second, "world government is a terrible idea since it can lead to world tyranny"; America should not have its ability to do good constrained by international bodies such as the United Nations. Third, "statesmen should, above all, have the ability to distinguish friends from enemies" (Kristol, 2003); the world comprises good and evil actors, and the latter must be treated with firm resolve, not appeasement or compromise. What unified the neoconservatives, according to Fukuyama (2006, pp. 15–16), was their hatred of communism and their condemnation of liberals who criticized their country and undermined American resolve at a time when it was most sorely needed.

Finally, Kristol's fourth principle maintains that, as a superpower, the United States is subject to special rules in international politics. "[T]he 'national interest' is not a geographical term, except for fairly prosaic matters like trade and environmental regulation," Kristol argues. Rather, "A larger nation has more extensive interests," and these include "ideological interests." Helping fellow democracies or "friends" such as Israel is crucial to furthering US goals (Kristol, 2003). Neoconservatives promote the use of military power to advance American goals, with a focus on the Middle East as the primary locus of US interests.

Neoconservatives have seen themselves as "hard Wilsonians," promoting what they believe to have been the ideals of President Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I: to spread democracy as a necessary condition for global stability and peace. Like neoconservatives, Wilson saw America as a crusading nation with a global mission. Yet, even though he had a strong moral, even self-righteous streak, Wilson was quite different from today's neoconservatives. First, he was a keen promoter of international institutions, and considered it his greatest failure as president that he did not manage to persuade the United States to join the League of Nations. Furthermore, having seen the carnage of war, Wilson detested the armaments industry. Thus neoconservatives who borrow Wilson's expansive vision of America's power conveniently ignore his warnings about militarization and unilateral solutions to complex problems. The fact that Wilson distrusted big business has also been ignored by the many neoconservatives who are often enthusiastic participants in America's corporate capitalist system (Bacevich, 2005, pp. 10–12; MacDonald, 2009, p. xv).

Not all neoconservatives supported the Iraq War. Francis Fukuyama parted company with his former colleagues by 2004. Jeanne Kirkpatrick was never in favour of the war and had serious reservations about the "Bush Doctrine" of pre-emptive attack and spreading democracy by force, although her criticisms were far more muted than Fukuyama's (Podhoretz, 2006). Further, while neoconservatism influenced the Bush administration, it was not the be-all and end-all of American foreign policy. President Bush played to a variety of constituencies, including "country club Republicans, realists, representatives of oil and other corporate interests, evangelicals, hardball political strategists, right-wing Catholics, and neoconservative Jews allied with Israel's right-wing Likud party" (Cole, 2005).

A detailed examination of the defence industry before and after 9/11 makes it clear that major contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing pushed for war, helped by the revolving door between government officials and industry. Spending on weapons systems and military equipment, which had fallen significantly with the end of the Cold War, could once again be justified to fight a war that was virtually limitless in its global scope (Scheer, 2008, pp. 14–15, 54–8). The oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, also influenced the Bush administration's policies (MacDonald, 2009, p. xvi ; Woodward, 2006, p. 3).

Historians and political scientists have judged neoconservatives critically, viewing their vision for the United States as an exercise in imperial hubris mixed with naive optimism. Certainly there were strategic miscalculations. For instance, many neoconservatives saw Saddam Hussein as a modern-day Hitler and pushed for his removal on moral rather than strategic grounds, without regard for the consequences. Similarly, many neoconservatives wrongly assumed that US models of democracy and capitalism could be imposed on very different societies such as Iraq and Afghanistan. They will also be remembered for contributing to the worst financial crisis their country has seen since the Great Depression (MacDonald, 2009, pp. xiv–xvii).

Nationalism

Perhaps the best concise definition of **nationalism** to date comes from the Canadian political scientist and former Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff (1994):

> As a political doctrine, nationalism is the belief that the world's people are divided into nations, and that each of these nations has the right to self-determination, either as self-governing units within existing states, or as nation-states of their own.
>
> As a cultural ideal, nationalism is the claim that while men and women have many identities, it is the nation which provides them with their primary form of belonging.
>
> As a moral ideal, nationalism is an ethic of heroic sacrifice, justifying the use of violence in defence of one's own nation against enemies, internal or external. These claims—political, moral and cultural—underwrite each other. The moral claim that nations are entitled to be defended by force of violence

> depends on the cultural claim that the needs they satisfy for security and belonging are uniquely important. The political idea that all peoples should struggle for nationhood depends on the cultural claim that only nations can satisfy these needs. The cultural idea in turn underwrites the political claim that these needs cannot be satisfied without self-determination. (p. 34)

The Academic Study of Nationalism

The study of nations and nationalism is commonly divided among three schools: the primordialists, the modernists and perennialists, and the ethno-symbolists. *Primordialists* see the nation as a natural phenomenon, a normal and understandable aspect of human relationships. In the 1950s and 1960s, the sociologists Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils emphasized the power of "primordial attachment" to the nation as a community with unique characteristics that must be preserved (Smith, 2010, pp. 55–8).

By contrast, the *modernists* see the nation as an invented or constructed form of social organization. They argue that nations are often created by elites who seek to gain power within a state and use nationalism as a tool to control and manipulate the masses. According to this view, the idea of nationalism was a product of the Industrial Revolution, when rural people began leaving their homes to seek work in the growing cities. Modernists such as Ernest Gellner argue that, having left their village identities, local dialects, and cultural traditions behind, these people had a deep need for a new identity that could be shared with people very different from themselves. Nationalism became a way of bringing disparate peoples together under the umbrella of an overarching "high culture" that had some similarities with traditional folk cultures but was also substantially different. The dislocation of urban spaces, the loss of former identity, and a sense of vulnerability all helped make the national symbols and narratives promoted by the elites attractive (Gellner, 1983, p. 57).

The precise content of national narratives is relatively unimportant. Gellner famously argued that "[t]he cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred and patch would have served as well" (1983, p. 56). Other well-known modernists include Paul Brass, Benedict Anderson (who coined the term *imagined communities* to describe nations), and Tom Nairn, who developed an economic modernist model based on Marxism (see Ozkirimli, 2000).

A related group called the *perennialists* share the modernists' opinion that nations are constructed but do not necessarily associate their origins with the Industrial Revolution. Liah Greenfeld (1993) asserts that nations in some cases were created before industrialization. In England she traces the birth of the nation to the creation of the Protestant Church of England under King Henry VIII. Later nations developed in preindustrial rural Germany in the early nineteenth century and agrarian Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these cases, other forms of association, such as religion and kingship, helped bind individuals together as coherent "peoples" (Greenfeld, 1993).

The third group of nationalism theorists are the *ethno-symbolists*, who argue that nations are constructed and invented, but not necessarily by elites. According to Anthony D. Smith, many nations are based on pre-existing ethnic groups, with their own sense of identity and their own history. Arguably, Smith's main contribution to the discipline of nationalism studies is his privileging of what he called *ethnies*: "named

human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with specific territory, and a sense of solidarity" (Smith, 1998, p. 191). Not all ethnies become nations, but most nations are derived from ethnies, particularly "ethnic cores" that have the characteristics required to absorb and assimilate other ethnies and make them part of an emerging nation. Unlike the nation it may later become, a core ethnie needs to selectively borrow new elements from foreign groups through "controlled culture contact" (Smith, 1990, pp. 35–9). As the ethnic core expands and absorbs other ethnies, it incorporates their elements within its growing ethnic (and ultimately proto-national) culture.

In time the ethnic core forms a coherent nation, with a national homeland, a unified economy, and unified myths and symbols (Smith, 1990, pp. 40, 64–5). For Smith, local history and identity are crucial elements in the construction of national myth. The communal past of a nation forms a "repository or quarry from which materials may be selected in the construction and invention of nations" (Smith, 1996, p. 37).

History and Further Distinctions

The search for national identity was initially a European phenomenon, centring first on the Italian and German quests for unification, achieved in 1871 and 1861, and then, after World War I, on national **self-determination** as set out by US President Woodrow Wilson in the peace settlement. After World War II, European colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East sought, and largely secured, their independence. In more recent times there has been a resurgence of nationalism, particularly in Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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PHOTO 5.3 | Traditional buildings in Tana Toraja, Indonesia. The Toraja are one of over 300 ethnic groups in the nation of Indonesia, whose national motto is "Unity in Diversity."

The political scientist Hans Kohn (1944) made a useful distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism. **Civic nationalism** is loyalty to the institutions and values of a particular political community. **Ethnic nationalism**, by contrast, is loyalty to a shared inheritance based on culture, language, or religion. Where the first type is inclusive, open to anyone who wishes to sign on to the values and institutions of a particular community, the second is exclusive in the sense that membership is inherited and is not the product of rational choice.

Because of its inclusive character, civic nationalism seems to present less of a threat to political order than exclusive ethnic nationalism. This distinction can be exaggerated, however, because even a political community based on loyalty to institutions and values has borders that must be protected. Even if inclusion is not based on religion or race, it must be based on something, and this has the potential to cause conflict. On the other hand, despite its negative image, nationalism need not necessarily result in division and conflict. Liberal nationalism, for instance, though too romantic for some, sees nations as the source of internal unity and envisages co-operation between nations.

KEY POINTS

- Nationalism has had an enormous impact on world politics since the nineteenth century.
- Primordialists argue that nations are natural, ancient, and a central part of the social community.
- Modernists trace the emergence of nations to the Industrial Revolution and the need for new identities during periods of urban dislocation and social change.
- Perennialists look farther back, to preindustrial societies.
- Ethno-symbolists draw a more complex picture. For Smith, ethnic groups or "ethnies" develop over time to form the core of modern nations. Myths and symbols are central to this process.
- A useful distinction can be made between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism.

Fascism

Unlike the other ideologies we have discussed in this chapter, fascism is a twentieth-century phenomenon. It is particularly associated with the relatively short-lived regimes led by Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) in Italy and Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) in Germany. Indeed, some commentators regard fascism as a distinctly interwar phenomenon (Trevor-Roper, 1947). Others disagree with this limitation (Kitchen, 1976). Various scholars have attributed the rise of fascism to particular political and historical circumstances, to a flaw in human psychology, or to moral decay (Vincent, 1995, pp. 145–50).

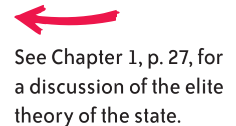
Fascism represents an extreme form of nationalism accompanied (unlike other forms of nationalism) by a set of racial, social, and moral ideas, most of which are simply

unacceptable in a modern liberal democracy. In addition, fascism rejects abstract intellectualizing in favour of action, instinct, and emotion. For this reason scholars looking for texts to use as primary sources have had to rely mainly on the works of the Italian fascist Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1926/1969).

Fascism is, above all, anti-Enlightenment, opposing ideas such as liberalism, democracy, reason, and individualism. It is also profoundly anti-Marxist, although Nazism was seen as a form of nationalized (as opposed to international) socialism. Although certain elements of fascism recall conservatism, in particular its emphasis on the organic state, fascism is also revolutionary.

Fascism's opposition to liberalism and individualism stems from the belief that the community creates individuals—without it, they are nothing. It therefore rejects the liberal notion that humans can be imagined living in a pre-social state; rather, it maintains that identities are forged through membership in a community. In fascist theory, the state gives meaning to individual lives; hence individuals should be subservient to it. This is what justifies the totalitarian state in which the individual is subsumed in the interests of the state's goals.

At the same time, fascism embraces the elitist position that some individuals are superior to others; see Box 5.6. The masses are perceived as largely ignorant and in need of elite leaders, particularly one all-powerful leader, a Führer or Duce. In German fascism, this emphasis on inequality and hierarchy took on a "racial" character; thus German "Aryans" were considered superior to all other groups but in particular Jews, Roma ("Gypsies"), and Africans. Belief in the superiority of German nation or *Volk* fed into a militant, aggressive, and expansionist nationalism whose aim was to establish the dominance of the "master race" around the globe. Ironically, although **social Darwinism** would suggest that subjugating the "inferior races" should have been relatively easy for the Aryans, there was a constant fear that the former would dominate and destroy the Aryans if they were not eliminated first. War was seen as virtuous and character building, while also serving the goal of establishing racial supremacy; see Box 5.7.



See Chapter 1, p. 27, for a discussion of the elite theory of the state.

KEY CONCEPT BOX 5.6

Elitism in Political Thought

The concept of elitism has played a role in a number of the ideological traditions we have discussed in this chapter. It's important to recognize the different ways in which the concept is used. The classical elite theorists discussed in Chapter 1 put forward an empirical theory, arguing that elites will always exist, whatever the claims of democracy; they did not claim that elite rule was desirable. By contrast, both fascism and conservatism often use the term in a normative sense, arguing that rule by an elite is not only inevitable but desirable. In National Socialism (Nazism) this elitism took on racial connotations; however, this has not been the case with conservatism.

KEY CONCEPT BOX 5.7

Nazism and the Biological State

Racist and anti-Semitic musings predate the Nazi era. They can be traced back at least as far as the nineteenth century, when Houston Stewart Chamberlain (among others) identified an enduring history of deep racial antagonism between "Aryans" and "Semites" (Haas, 1992, p. 28). Eugenic theories (promoting the gradual "perfection" of humanity [a highly skewed and unrealizable goal] through the sterilization of certain groups and the "judicious mating" of those with desirable physical and mental traits) were advanced by many others, including Sir Francis Galton, his American disciple Charles Davenport, and the German theorist Wilhelm Schallmayer.

What was unique about Nazi anti-Semitism was the German state's unprecedented ability to "redefine evil"—to reconceptualize race relations by pitting one group in stark competition with another (Haas, 1992, p. 2). If Germans were the apogee of human development, Jews were dangerous "racial aliens" (Burleigh & Wippermann, 1991, p. 305). Ethics were so twisted in the Nazi era that good and evil took on entirely new definitions. According to Peter Haas, the regime was able to commit "what we judge to be heinous crimes" not because the Germans were quintessentially evil and brutal, but because they "simply came to understand ethics in different terms" (Haas, 1992, p. 2). Claudia Koonz's work on the "Nazi conscience" explores how the regime rejected universal forms of morality. Instead the state promoted biased ethical values that were "appropriate to their Aryan community." In their racialized view of the world, Nazis became "ethnic fundamentalists" (Koonz, 2003, pp. 1, 13).

Yehuda Bauer describes the Nazi project as "the most radical attempt at changing the world that history has recorded to date: the most novel and the most revolutionary" (2001, pp. 52–3). Even though Jews posed no threat whatsoever, a racial ethic cast them in a demonic light, making their destruction inevitable. As Bauer puts it: "No genocide to date has been based so completely on myths, on hallucinations, on abstract, nonpragmatic ideology—which then was executed by very rational, pragmatic means" (2001, p. 48).

Part and parcel of this unique ethical system was the obsession with racial hygiene and biological purity. Lifton (1986) describes the Nazi system as a "biocracy":

> The model here is a theocracy, a system of rule by priests of a sacred order under the claim of divine prerogative. . . . Just as in a theocracy, the state itself was no more than a means to achieve [what Hitler claimed to be] "a mission of the German people on earth": that of "assembling and preserving the most valuable stocks of basic racial elements in this [Aryan] people . . . [and] raising them to a dominant position." (p. 17)

This was a worldview unique to the Nazis. Though they were not the first to hypothesize on the importance of racial purity nor to justify the killing of those they deemed inferior, they were the first to construct an entire worldview based on these concepts (Burleigh & Wippermann, 1991, pp. 30–1; Lifton, 1986, p. 46; Proctor, 1988, pp. 10–45). National Socialism was soon dubbed "applied biology," with biology figuring as "one of the defining features of the Nazi world view" (Proctor, 1988, pp. 30, 45, 47, 64). Of course Jews were not the only victims of the biocracy. Mentally and physically handicapped Aryans were also killed, and Roma and Sinti ("Gypsies") were exterminated. Nevertheless, Jews were the chief victims of Nazi biocratic principles and the most obvious target of the state (Bauman, 1989, p. 70).

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PHOTO 5.4 | The annual "March of the Living" commemoration held on Holocaust Memorial Day at the infamous Auschwitz–Birkenau death camps in Poland. The building in the background is the gatehouse of the Auschwitz II–Birkenau camp.

KEY POINTS

- Fascists reject abstract intellectualizing in favour of action.
- Fascism is best understood in terms of its oppositional mentality.
- Central fascist themes are the state's role in creating meaning for individuals and an elitist view of humans.
- In Germany, belief in the superiority of some humans took on a strong racial dimension, to the extent that Nazi Germany was known as the "racial state."

Anarchism

Anarchism has many similarities with the liberal and socialist traditions. Whether it has had any lasting impact on the development of modern politics is questionable, however. Anarchist thought dates back to the nineteenth century and has come in a number of varieties, although it is most closely associated with the socialist tradition (Goodwin, 2007, p. 151). Anarchists such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), and Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) were all involved in the socialist International Working Men's Association, regularly engaging in debate, and subsequently falling out, with Marx.

What anarchists share is their abhorrence of the state, which they regard as an illegitimate—even criminal—organization that unlawfully exercises force over individuals and

society and reduces the liberty of the people. But what do anarchists actually oppose? Is it just the state, or is it the state, government, and any form of authority structure? If the latter, then anarchism takes an optimistic view of human nature. In fact, though, anarchist thinkers have differing views on this topic. Some say that human nature is intrinsically good; others, that it is socially determined and can be shaped by the social and political environment. Whatever the exact form of the theory, anarchists all tend to argue that in an anarchist society the people will be morally correct and do what is required of them.

Compared to the other ideologies we have considered, anarchism has had little influence on modern politics. Strong anarchist movements existed between the 1880s and the 1930s, and anarchists briefly held power during the Spanish Civil War (Vincent, 1995, p. 117). Since then, anarchist tendencies have appeared in the 1960s counterculture, student protest movements, and more recently in the environmental and anti-globalization movements. Nevertheless, it has remained a peripheral ideology, tainted (however unjustly) with the charge that it is a recipe for confusion and chaos.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined a variety of traditional ideologies. Clearly they have exercised an extraordinary influence on world politics, though not always in the way their adherents intended. Indeed, such has been the negative impact of at least some of them that since the middle of the twentieth century political theorists have been much more circumspect about offering the kind of overarching interpretations of the world, or "metanarratives," that ideologies traditionally offered.

Ideologies have become much less ambitious and much less certain. We will discuss the ideologies that have emerged in this different climate—such as postmodernism and environmentalism—in the next chapter. For now, we will simply note that it is easy to see why these new ideologies have become more important in recent years. The twenty-first century, unlike the nineteenth, is deeply skeptical about the ability of human beings to master the world; therefore we are much more cautious about universal ideologies that proclaim to understand the world and how to put it right.

Key Questions

1. What is an ideology?
2. Does new liberalism develop or depart from classical liberalism?
3. What are the core principles of liberalism?
4. Is modern social democracy socialist?
5. Is socialism utopian and authoritarian?
6. To what extent can conservatism be considered an ideology?
7. Is nationalism an ideology?
8. Did fascism die with Hitler and Mussolini?
9. Assess the claim that fascism is concerned more with political action than political ideas.
10. Is anarchism naive and unrealistic?