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Theoretical and Comparative Study on Political Ideologies

Over time, the human history has challenged men in the course of their lives occasioned by different events to think and rethink on how to live with one another; this was the birth of the political society. Since then scholars, political leaders and even States have come with different ideas pertaining to political leadership in what has been called political ideologies. This entails, the way the people should be governed, the relationship between the government and the citizens and generally the system of government or governance they wish to practice. An ideology can be described as a set of ideas, political ideologies is therefore a set of political ideas at the simplest of its definition.

The term political ideology has been defined differently by different political scholars however; the common thread that runs through these definitions is that it is a set of social beliefs, values and ideas forming the basis of a social, economic and political philosophy of a particular group of people. These systems of belief and values provide the people with a perspective upon which to evaluate the proper role of their elected leaders, prioritization of public policies and the structure on which different elements of the society should be laid. Research has shown that most people posses a particular political ideology irrespective of whether they realize or not. For example, in the United States most citizens subscribe to liberalism or conservatism which are some of the widely spread political ideologies in the world. Other political ideologies include: Socialism, Communism and Marxism among others.

But what does it mean to be a Liberal or Conservative? Or still a Socialist or a Communist? Perhaps, this provides a starting point in looking at the theoretical and comparative aspects of various political ideologies. Political scholars have identified different political ideologies a long a political spectrum as a way of doing a comparison and visualizing different political ideologies. This spectrum normally described along a left-middle-right line. However, it must be noted that these categorization is not all conclusive as many ideologies encompass different views and can fall on different points along the line. That is, these political ideologies are so complex and this spectrum oversimplifies them.

Liberalism and Conservatism are two main contrasting political ideologies often used in succession. Liberalism is a set of political, social and economic ideologies that is founded on the values of individual liberty, equality, and economic freedom, regulated and democratic government based on the rule of law. It is political ideology that is anchored on the doctrine of equality. At its very core this ideology denounces social and economic inequality in its entirety. Liberals subscribe to the idea that equal opportunity is the driving force to achieving the end, they denounce all discriminatory practices by the government that can lead to greater wealth inequalities. They advocate for public policies that provide a level playing field for all citizens. In doing so the government must hold the civil liberties and rights alongside the progressive values.

Liberalism as a political ideology also believes that it is the responsibility of the government to protect her people. Moreover, they advocate for an egalitarian approach to public policy where the government is supposed to ensure that all citizens have an equal access to affordable healthcare, a clean and safe environment as well as quality education. Generally, they believe that it is the responsible to ensure that her citizens are comfortable as a advocated for their various policies such as affirmative action programs, progressive taxations, worker’s health and safety among others.

Conservatism on the other hand is a political ideology that advocates for strong preference for the historically inherited as opposed to the abstract and ideal. Generally, this political ideology values the creation and maintenance of stable systems of societies that are anchored upon a hierarchy of power lodged in a traditional class of leaders with great regards to the traditional institutions and values. Conservatism do not give attention to the powers of the state neither is it seeking to put a limitation to the state powers. However, conservatism is concerned about change and its necessity that is they denounce revolutionary approach and advocates for an evolutionary approach to matters of state.

According to conservatism change should only occur when it is absolutely necessary, it should be as a result of avoiding a greater evil but again the process of change must be regulated. Any suggested change to the current ideas and principles must be carefully reviewed in reference to the facts and the reality on the ground as opposed to an abstract theory. Change must therefore be a product of pragmatism based on traditions and previously accepted practices. Conservatives believe that people need strong leadership institutions, strict moral codes and very firm laws. Conservatives hold firmly to the existing ways of life and therefore the government act as a servant to these existing good old ways and nobody should try changing them. The politicians must resist the temptation to change the society and politics.

The above political ideologies present quite a dynamic view in terms political, social and economic ideologies that sustain various people and those that operates in aspects of the society. It is worth noting that the two ideologies are sharply contrasting with liberalism touted as the left wing ideology whereas conservatism represents the right wing political ideology. Among the distinguishing features of these two sets of ideologies include: whereas Conservatives believe in pursuing policies because they are pragmatic and they can work. Liberals pursue policies because they are good and make them comfortable, their viability and practicability comes second. Liberals believe to a right of revolution and to overthrow the government should it deviate from compact will of the people and become tyrannical while conservatives advocate for an evolutionary approach to change in the system in the governance structure.

Conservatives are not suspicious of the powers of the government and are not concerned about the powers of the state provided it cannot bring about change. Liberals on the contrary are extremely conscious about the powers of the government and strive to have a limitation to the powers of the state and the government by ensuring that the rule of law is upheld. Whereas the conservatives believe in personal responsibility, limited government intervention, individual liberty and strong traditional values; Liberals advocate for government intervention in achieving equal opportunity to ensure equality for all. They believe that it is the duty of the government to protect her citizens by alleviating social ills and protecting civil rights and liberties.

In summary, the core spectrums that remain consistent in the conservative ideology are: high value on the existing systems and institutions s as inherited, acceptance of human inequality and the social order, recognition of the need for a sense of community among individuals and individual responsibility, status quo belief in mankind’s essential base and the irrational nature of human. Liberalism on the other hand is founded on the idea of a contract between the people and their government, right of revolution on the violation of the contract, natural rights as provided to all people by the creator, faith in and support of human rational potential, limited powers of the government and support for change. (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2006)

Reference

Muirhead, R. & Rosenblum, N. (2006). Political Liberalism vs. “The Great Game of Politics”: The Politics of Political Liberalism. *Perspectives On Politics*, *4*(01).