The Ideological Undertone of Public Policy

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Abstract

This reseach paper investigates the ideological undertone of public policy that is how public policy responds to persistent ideological shifts in dynamic political and economic systems. Major importance has been placed in the published works of Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy and Karl Marx to elucidate the reflection of ideology on public policy. The research argues that social scientists must take the importance of the concept of ideology in the policy process. Ideology does not make policies but the decisions of statesmen do and these decisions are made in contexts in which ideology play roles.

Introduction

The term ideology comes into existence in a highly philosophical, political debate, conflict and controversy during the French Revolution. The term acquired several meanings from the early days of the first French empire. The word ideology was coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in 1796 while assembling the parts of ideas near to the lockan sense and logy. Tracy used the term to refer to an aspect of his concept of the science of ideas (to the study itself, not the subject of the study). He separated three aspects of ideology namely, ideology, general grammar and logic, considering each aspect separately as a subject and the means and reason for this science. According to him among the three aspects of ideology is the most generic term because the science of ideas also contains the study of their expression and deductions, (Lukas Georg 1923).

The term "ideology" can into existence fully at the pick of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Subsequently, the term Ideology acquired several definitions and meanings thereafter.

The ideology and the associated system of ideas attached as coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in 1796, while he was waiting for his pending trial in prison at the pick of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. He created the word by assembling the words *idea*, from the Greek word **ἰδέα** (near to the Lockean sense) and *logy*, from **λογία.** After the coup

that removed Maximilien Robespierre from office Tracy was released and allowed to continue his work on the concept of ideology.

In his reaction to the terroristic phase of the French revolution he tried extensively and at the end, he worked out a rational system of ideas as a means of opposing the irrational mob impulses that had nearly destroyed him during the reign of terror. Accordingly, he devised the term ideology as a "science of ideas" which he hoped would form a secure foundation for moral and political sciences. In his views, the term was based on two things.

1. The mental impression of peoples' experiences during their interaction with the material world.
2. The impression that was formed in their minds due to those sensations.

Antoine Destutt de Tracy's conception of the term "Ideology" was that of liberal philosophy that would defend the individual's liberty, property, free markets, and constitutional limits of state power. Tracy argued that in these aspects ideology is the most generic term because the science of ideas also contains the study of an individual's expressions and deductions.

Tracy's worked came to the limelight during the reign Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte often used "ideology" as a term of abuse, which he always threw to his liberal foes in Tracy's **Institut National.** According to Karl Mannheim's historical reconstruction of the shifts in the meaning of ideology, the modern meaning of the term was derived when Napoleon used of it to describe his opponents as "the ideologues". Karl Marx adopted this negative sense of the term and used it in his writings to described Tracy as a "fischblütige Bourgeoisdoktrinär", a fish-blooded bourgeois doctrinaire", (Jürgen Habermas 1957).

In the view of Karl Marx, a society's dominant ideology is integral to its superstructure. According to the Marxist economic base and superstructure model of society, which highlighted in the relationship between modes of production, and *s*uperstructur*e* as the concepts that denotes the dominant ideology of every society (religious, legal, political systems). Marx was of the view that the economic base of production determines the political superstructure of a society. The interests of the ruling class determine the superstructure and the nature of the justifying ideology/actions feasible in a society because it is the ruling class that control the means of production in every society. In the feudal mode of production which Marx used to illustrate his points, religious ideology is the most prominent aspect of the superstructure, while in capitalist formations, ideologies such as liberalism and social democracy are dominant. As a result of this great importance of the ideological justification in a society, the alienated groups of the society is always confused politically due to this false consciousness. (Roland Barthes 1967)

In the century preceding Tracy's definition of ideology, the term ideology moved back and forth between positive and negative connotations in the quest to give it an acceptable

meaning. Hippolyte gave the most the accessible source for the near original meaning *of ideology* in his work on the Ancient Régime (the first volume of the book "Origins of Contemporary France"). In his views, he likened ideology to philosophy by the Socratic Method, but in this case, it was without extending the vocabulary beyond the conception already possessed by the general readers and without highlighting examples from the observational requirements of practical science. Taine's views were in the line of those identifies by Destutt De Tracy, and also with his Milieu, which includes Condillac as one of its precursors. Today the term "ideology" has dropped some of its sting of criticism and has become a neutral term commonly used in the analysis of differing political opinions and views of social groups. While Karl Marx situated the term within class struggle and domination, other scholars believe that it was a necessary part of an institutional functioning and social integration, (Minogue Kenneth 1985).

Ideology can also be described as a system of social belief, myth or a closely organized system of beliefs, values and opinions that forms the bases of a social, economic, political philosophy or program.

The word ideology can also be explained as a full belief system, a set of belief, values and opinions that shape the way a person or group, such as a social club, an age grade, pressure group or apolitical party thinks, acts and understands the world. Ideology is a system of abstract thought applied in the public domain as a control to politics, religion, economics and the way the society see things. Every political or economic tendency entails an ideology whether or not it is propounded as an explicit system of thought or not, (Helen Fein 2008).

Though in contemporary philosophy the term ideology was seen from a narrower scope than its original concept. Ideas in the views of the modern day philosophers were expressed in broad concepts such as worldview, imaginary and ontology,(Christian Duncker 2006).

Althusserian sense, see ideology as "the imagined existence (or idea) of things as it relates to the real conditions of existence."

Every society has culturally unique ways of thinking about the world, unite and people in their behaviour. Anthropologists refer to this body of ideas that people share as an ideology. Ideology, according to them can be broken down into three parts or categories namely, beliefs, values and ideas. People's beliefs give them an understanding of how the world works and how they should respond to the actions of others and their environment. Particular beliefs are often closely tied to the daily concern of domestic life such as making a living, health and sickness, happiness and sadness, interpersonal relationships and relationships between life and death. People's values tell the differences between right and wrong or good and bad. Ideas serve as models of what people hope to achieve in life. Many

people rely on religion, a system of belief in the supernatural to shape their values and ideas and to influence their behaviour. Beliefs, values and ideals also come from observations of the natural world as a practice which anthropologists commonly refer to as secularism (exclusion of religion from public life), (Hassler 2007).

Meta- Ideology

Meta-ideology is the study of the structure, form and manifestation of ideologies. Meta-ideology posits that ideology is a coherent system of ideas relying upon a few basic assumptions about reality that may or may not have any factual bases. It is a kind of mediation between contending ideas with the aim of assisting in achieving agreement or resolving conflicting issues between the basic thought patterns inherent in the contending ides. Meta-ideology represents reality or a totally none- existing reality bound created on the basis of a generally accepted over the simplified standard image of persons or groups adding to contending idea to make it more substantial and more acceptable to the society. Meta-ideology is often aimed at aiding dominant discourse that distributes the ethnocentric doctrinal perspective that things have an essence or ideal nature that is independent of and prior to their existence. A very clear example of a discourse influenced by a reproduced idea is the stereotyping of the Muslim culture and other minority groups by the United States media after 9/11 events, This discourse influenced the

dominants ideas distributed by the media especially in the United States regarding the use of words like Terrorism and Trauma. These words were structured by the media and the United States Government to persuade and control society. The reproduction of these near reality discourse led to the re-emphasis of concepts like Nationalism and the societal acceptance of Anti- Terrorism Laws and "war on Terror" that resulted in increased surveillance and reduction of privacy in individual and group activities worldwide and the domination of the United States over Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. This is a glaring evidence of the structure, control and power of dominant discourse in a society. This structure and control arose from the constant repetition of a reproduced Meta Ideology that portrays particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics about particular ideas as seen and perceived depending on the intended encoding of the reproduced messages, (Jean-Francois Lyotard 2000).

Societies give different interpretation and adopt the most suitable meaning and interpretation of Meta -Ideological concepts. Modern ideologies are ambiguous, complex and contradictory terms adopted in the definition of developments in culture and philosophy. They are mostly characterized by the acceptance of the fact that universally accepted myths, norms, values and truths are relatively uncertain, dubious narratives that are constantly pervasive and contradictory critique in response to already established concepts. The modern concepts of ideology were built on borrowed references and analyzed concepts of the outcome from works of different scholars. This, when combined with Metanarratives, gave rise to the

sceptic, dubious critiques where the truth, reason, science and values were lost in a world that is structured and representational. The aim of modern ideology is to reveal, persuade, analyze, interrogate, challenge, and comment on the legitimacy of all the elements thrown into the public domain in a critical manner that allows the public to consider and question the dominant discourse or ideologies, (Jean Baudrillard 1987).

Ideas are personal opinions and assumed individual feelings rather than facts that influence an individual's decision or choices that serve as seeds around which further thoughts grow, (Miner M. David 1961). According to Miner David's perception, ideology is neither right nor wrong but is based on the preconceived resultant effect of a future event that its certainty cannot be proved, this preconception creates leeway for an intellectual strategy for classifying the world. The principles of ideology range from the vitality and flavour of true believers to ideological perfection. The need for justification and conviction for societal actions, myth and belief drifts around the doctrinaire level of politics, culture and religion.

In the works of George Watford and Halford Walsby titled **systematic ideology**. The scholars made attempts to explore the relationship between ideology and social systems by distinguishing political ideology from political philosophy. David Miner described six different ways in which the word ideology was used in this concept;

i. As a collection of normative contents.
ii. As a form or internal logical structure that ideas have within a set.
iii. By the role of ideas in human social interaction.
iv. By the role of ideas in the structure of an organization.
v. As a persuasive meaning
vi. As the bases of social interaction.

Willard A. Mullins's outlined the following four basic characters of ideology:

i. It must have power over cognition
ii. It must be capable of guiding one's evaluation.
iii. It must provide guidance towards action.
iv. It must be logically coherent.

Willard's views of ideology were opposed to the related (but different) issues of historical and utopian myth and belief.

Christian Dunker was of the opinion that ideology must reflect all the critical issues. In his work on the study of the concept of ideology, he strived to bring ideological concepts into the front burner as well as the closely connected concerns of epistemology and history. In this work, he defined the term ideology as a system of presentation that explicitly or

implicitly claims absolute truth. Though the word ideology is most often found in political discourse, there are many different kinds of ideology which include, (Marshall Mc Lewen 2015)

i. Political
ii. Social
iii. Epistemological
iv. Ethical

The Marxist economic base and superstructure models of the society denote the dominant ideology (religion and legal, political). Karl Marx in his views saw the economic base of production as the primary determinant of the political superstructure. According to Marx economic interests determines the economic superstructure, and that the nature of the justifying ideological actions is feasible because the ruling class controls the means of production, an example is the feudal mode of production. In this case, religious ideology is the most prominent aspect of the superstructure, and the in capitalist formation ideologies such as liberalism and social democracy dominates the superstructure. In Karl Marks's justification of a society, the underlying ideological concept is very important, ideology confuses the alienated groups of the society politically via false consciousness, such as the case of commodity fetishism (the belief that the value is inherent in a commodity) rather than value is added to the commodity via labour, (Karl Marx 1956).

Karl Marx was of the view that social reproduction is affected by the ruling class and by the dominant ideology that represents every social and economic class. In a nutshell, the economic interests of the ruling class are the economic interest of the entire society. In the same vein, George Lucas saw ideology as a projection of the class consciousness of the ruling class and Antonio Gramsci adopted cultural hegemony as the main concept of his explanation as to why the working class has a false ideological conception of what their best interests are.

Marx was of the view that the class which has the control of the means of production at its disposal has control over the mental production in that society. According to him, the dominant ideologies of capitalism are:

i. Classical Liberalism
ii. Modern liberalism
iii. Social liberalism
iv. Neoliberalism

The Marxist formulation of ideology as an instrument of social reproduction is conceptually very important to the sociology of knowledge, (Karl Mannheim, Danel Bell and Jurgen Habermas 1975).

Mannheim developed and progressed from the total but special Marxist conception of ideology to a general and total acknowledgement that all ideology results from social life to the general theory of ideology (a psychoanalytic insight that ideology does not include only conscious but also unconscious myths, ideas, values and beliefs), (Mannheim and Karl 1965).

Ideology as a State Apparatuses

The concept of ideology being a state apparatus was first mentioned by Louis Althusser as he proposed both the spiritual and materialistic conception of ideology, in a special discourse known as the lacunar discourse. His emphasis was based on a number of propositions, which were untrue, but suggested a number of other propositions which are true. These were the essence of the lacunar discourse (what is *not* told but is suggested).

In the Lacunar in discourse, he used this special approach in describing the materialistic conception of ideology. Lacunar discourse emphasized, "what is not told but suggested". The notion of "all are equal before the law" which is generally adopted as the theoretical framework of the current legal system, suggests that all people are of equal worth or have equal opportunities before the law is in most cases not true, because of the concept of private properties and power over the means of production results to the fact that some people can have some privileges (much more) over others, (Pinker Steven 2003). This power disparity in ownership and wealth contradicts the claim of everybody shares both practical worth and future opportunity before the law. For the fact that some people can afford to pay for the best legal representation whenever they have legal issues and the affiliation theory of having long history of cordial and robots fraternization with people in the legal profession and the judiciary like the judges and other influential legal luminaries due to their wealthy backgrounds and positions in the society gives them an edge or privileges before the law, (Ronald Inglehart 1980)

In his explanation of his theory of ideology. Althusser described the concept of ideology as a state apparatus, he opined that ideology has no historical antecedents, though individual ideologies and interests that prompted the general class struggle in the society have histories and are related. According to him the general forms of ideology are not based on the history of these interrelated interests, rather it relays heavily on the fact that the myth and ideas that determine the social practice and interactions in a given society have nothing to do with the history of these interrelated interests that prompted class struggle in that society. In his first thesis 'Ideology has no history" he illustrated the fact that ideas have materialistic concepts, his illustrations made reference to the advice of Pascal towards the unbelievers 33 century AD (kneel and pray and then you will believe) which was very scandalous. What is ultimately ideological in the views of Althusser were not beliefs held subjectively in an individual's conscious mind but rather the discussions that brought about these myths and belief patterns. Getting involved repeatedly in the material institutional rituals without submitting these interactions to conscious

examination or critical thinking will definitely affect an individual's conceptualization of ideology, (Althusser 1987).

Ideology and Rationality

Rationality provides the link between the profit maximization objective and the production function that specifies the relationship between inputs, outputs and the price attachment of a product. In the consumption theory, rationality provides the link between utility maximization, ordering preferences and prices of different goods and services. The concept of rationality enables calculation that determines solutions to problems of choice when the production function, preferences and prices are known. The concepts of rationality form the basis of prescribing the predictable actual consumer behaviour. This illustration discusses how the concept of ideology and rationality were used in neo-classical and institutional economics which accommodated the limitations of the processing capacity of the human brain, (Allan A. Schmid 2002).

According to Allan A Schmid, in the global ordering preferences, products interaction with price changes are very essential to the standard consumption theory of constrained maximization. This theory assumes that preferences are coherent or transitive. When a consumer prefers product A to product B and product B to product C, then the consumer will prefer A to C. In the final analysis, more is preferred to less. This means that people know their preferences and on this bases of these preferences they act accordingly. In his explanations, Allan simply represented how people think and he used the theory to explain consumer's choice and to also analyze the effect of public policy on the welfare of the citizens.

The theory can be exemplified in the efforts of salesmen to change the order or context of consumer's choice but that these efforts cloud not bring about changes in the consumer's preferences and choice. Assuming that the government intends to increase savings by making it a mandatory investment requirement for everybody to have a pension plan, this will not succeed because people would not opt to substitute one form of savings with another. In most cases, businessmen and public policy act as if they do not believe that the concepts of "supra-rationality" which describes the way people think. They claim that there is considerable evidence that contradicts supra-rationality model, (Sippel, 1997).

Silvio Vietta opined that the development and expansion of western rationality from the ancient times onwards was shaped by ideologies like the "just war and the true religion", these according to him were the ideological concepts behind racism and nationalism or the eschatological vision of the future history as a kind of the new heaven on earth in communism. Ideas like this became dominant as at that time and provided the bases of hegemonic political actions of idealistic superficial appearance put up by leaders that they are endowed with a higher (political and religion) near God-like power that made them

assume lordship position over the life and death of millions of people e.g. the assumed status of the Pope during

the Medieval European States. The concept of rationality provided the basis of prescribing and extrapolation of the actual behaviours of members of a given society
These Ideological concepts contributed positively to the shielding of irrational political ideas and power that gave credence to the operation and claims of idealistic manifestation of past political and religious leaders. (Eric Voegelin 1976).

Political Ideology
Programs of most political parties are based on one ideology or the other. Political ideologies are sets of ethical ideas, principles, myths and symbols of a social movement or interactions, political associations, institution, clubs or large groups that explains how the society operates and offers some political or cultural blueprint for certain social or political order. Political ideologies are concerned with different aspects of the society, this includes the economy. education, health care, labour law, criminal law, the justice system, the provision of social security, the environment and social welfare, trade, minors, immigration, race the use of the military, and patriotism etc. (Francis Fukuyama 2001).

Political ideology is concerned to a large extent with how power is used. Most political parties follow its ideology very closely, while others derive its broad inspiration from a group of related ideologies without specifically embracing any particular one of them. The two main dimensions of political ideology are:

i. Goals (how society should work)
ii. Method (the most appropriate way to achieve ideal arrangement)

Political ideology is a collection of ideas containing certain ideas on what it considers as the best form of government and the best economic system. At times the same word is used to identify both an ideology and its main ideas, for instance, socialism may refer to an economic system or as an ideology supporting that economic system, (Minogue Kenneth 1985).

Ideology identifies themselves by their leanings on the political spectrum such as left, the centre or the right, though this at times are very controversial. Ideology can be distinguished from populism (politics based on the perceived interest of the ordinary people) and form a single issue on which a political party is built on e.g. Legalization of Marijuana and the Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica.

According to Michael Oakeshott's definition, ideology is a formalized short form of a supposed level of the rational truth contained in the traditional studies of the concept of ideology. This according to him has been carried out under the systematic ideology. In his

words, political ideology is concerned with many different aspects of a society which includes; health care, labour law, the justice system, provision of security and social welfare, trade, environment, immigration, race, use of the military, patriotism, and establishment of religions etc.

In the views of Slavoj Zizek, the notion of post-ideology can trigger very deep thinking about the blindest form of ideology, which a false consciousness or distrust proposed with the aim of misleading the society into believing what is not true and pretending not to be taking sides about it without truly doing so. The creation of false consciousness instead helping the people to understand the true, deepens the people's commitment to the existing ideas, values, myths or belief systems (Peter Sloterdijik 1998).

There are vase adopted methods of classifying political ideology, each of these methods generates a specific political spectrum. Many commentators on the ideological concepts of politics claim that we are living in a post-ideological era, in which the redemptive all-compassing ideologies have failed. This ideological colouration was associated with the views of Francis Fukuyama's work "At the End of History".

Government Ideology

When a political ideology dominates major components of a government's actions, it is said to be the government's ideology. Different government use ideology in different ways, and this is not only restricted to politics and society. Some ideas and views of schools of thought were either favoured or rejected over others, depending on their compatibility with the ideas adopted or how often they were used by the reigning social or political order, (George Lakoff 1988).

Psychologists have increasingly suggested that ideologies reflect unconscious motivational processes, as opposed to political convictions that ideology reflects independent and unbiased thinking. A research in 2008 on the impact on ideology on government proposed that ideologies may function as prepackaged units of interpretation that spread because of the basic human motives in their desire to understand the world, avoid existential threat, and the quest for the maintenance of valued interpersonal relationships in a given society. The research concluded that such motives may lead to the adoption of a disproportionate system of justifying views about the world. These researchers who were mostly psychologists generally found out that personal traits, individual differences, variables, needs, and ideological beliefs have a common threat that is peculiar to every society, (James J. Gibson 1965).

Public Policy

In every society, governmental entities enact laws, make policies, and allocate resources, this is applicable to all levels of society. Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given

topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives, (Dean G. Kilpatrick 2000).

Public policy as a field of study involves the study of specific policy problems and the government's responses to them. Political scientists involved in the study of public policy attempt to devise solutions to problems of public concern. They studied issues such as health care, pollution, the economy, and migration etc. Public policy overlaps with comparative politics in the study of comparative public policy, with international relations in the study of foreign policy and national security policy, and with political theory in considering ethics in policymaking, (Amador and Song 2007)

Individuals and groups always attempt to influence and shape public policy through education, advocacy, or mobilization of interest groups. The shaping of public policy is obviously different in the western type of democracies than in other forms of government. But it is apt to assume that the process of policy making always involves efforts by competing interest groups to influence policy maker's decisions in their favour. The main aspect of public policy is the law. Generally speaking, the law includes specific legislation and can be more broadly defined the provisions of the constitutional or international law. The law can influence how survivors of violence against women are treated and the types of services they will receive. In a like manner, legislation identifies areas in which research grants can be funded and often determines the amount of funding to be allocated in those areas. It is not out of place to say that public policy debates occur over proposed legislation and its funding.

Ideology and Public Policy

The renewed interest in the study of ideology by the 21st-century scholars and the demand by the likes of Geertz, that social scientists and historians must take the concept of ideology seriously prompted a crucial question, how do ideology bring about public policy? In Geertz's work, this question was intentionally avoided. In his view, ideology is not a cause of action, it is a part of the culture and as such acts in the context of, and provides the language and symbols for social actions, (Azzimonti Renzo 2005)

Post-modernist theorists were uninterested in the traditional questions about the causes of the phenomena they study. But for the historians, the question of causes of how things happen is central to their projects. Those that criticized Hunt's work raised this question. How, for example, did the American's belief in a hierarchy of race influence particular decisions? Neither were political scientists willing to abandon the question of what made people act and behave in a particular way (causes). Although theorists of public policy have increasingly accepted that ideas and ideology do not just influence matters in public policy, for many political scientists and historians, ideology needs a "causal mechanism" (a way to act on policy) in order to be useful in explaining events and actions of political actors.

The influence of ideology on public policy remains a sharply contested issue. Some scholars who focus on institutions and groups of policymakers argue that over time these decision makers adopt a shared ideology, culture and worldview that influence their decision and in turn public policies. Another group of scholars took a biographical approach to factors that influence public policies, they sort through personal papers and briefs of the decision-makers in an effort to uncover their beliefs, cultural heritage and other factors that may have influenced their decisions. In his work, Walter Carlsnaes suggested one answer to the problem of causation. In his views, ideology is a contextual variable in decision making.

In his book "*Ideology and Foreign Policy*", He argued that ideology does not cause foreign policy but that the decisions of statesmen do, and that these decisions are made in a particular context, in which ideology is very significant. According to Carlsnaes, policymakers react to particular situations and draw on the ideological and cultural resources provided by the situations in making their decisions. While ideology does not intervene in politics directly, it is a significant determinant of public policy due to the influence it has on the political actors, actions and events (Walter Carlsnaes 1998)

This proposition suggests an important pair of insights, that public policy cannot be understood in terms of ideology alone, but neither can ideology be ignored in public policy formulation. Morgenthau has for a very long time held to the view that decision of policymakers is influenced by their quest for power, respond to threats and opportunities available to them while making policy decisions. He believes that ideology provides a context open to analysis and which also serves as a conditioner to those responses that shape decision making.

The sociologist Max Weber, in his 1913 essay "The Social Psychology of the World's Religions," aptly stated that ideas determine the track along which actions are pushed by the dynamics of societal interest.

Conclusion

Ideas, beliefs and interest though separate yet they are entwined. Interests emanate from the context in which policymakers operate and are revealed in the language and the form of their decisions. In this way ideology, though do not have a direct impact on public policy, yet it remains a very significant part of the public policy.

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