

To what extent did the key political ideas directly influence change and development in
YOUR CHOSEN PERIOD OF STUDY?

Over the past 150 years a number of new political ideas have developed and been accepted as normal practice throughout the majority of European and international society, these come from all sectors on the political spectrum; ranging from extreme left to extreme right. Most of these have been manifested in one way or another since as far back as the middle ages, but it is only in very recent history that they have really 'stolen the limelight'. These ideas are not only responsible for forming the contemporary societies we live in, but also along the way they have influenced some of the most principal and key events history cares to remember.

These political ideas that have developed can be classified into two separate categories. The first category includes liberalism and nationalism, both of which are not confined to one country, these are broad ideals and can be found in many ideologies throughout the world we live in today. The second involves the more radical and extreme ideologies such as Fascism, Communism and Nazism. The main school of thought indicates that the first category contains the base ideals for the second categories more extreme politics. For example Nationalism is widely believed to be the basis for Fascism.

History is created when something changes and we look back at what it was before. The period of study is full of history, therefore it is also packed full with change and developments. Main areas of change were the specific areas of politics, societal change and economic change. 150 years ago, perhaps the most significant change in recent history was sweeping the world. Industrial revolutions were now seen as the way forward and Britain was at the heart, other countries were beginning to follow suit. Gone were the days of people and animals powering the machines that would draw in the harvest or produce the goods. Now machines would signify a better and more stable economic life for everybody. Or would they?

One of the most prominent effects of the industrial revolution was that now people had lost their jobs to machines then surely they would not be needed by the owners of the means of production. It would only take a small number of men to operate the machines,

surely the rest would have to look elsewhere for work? Not long before a German Sociologist and Historian named Karl Marx had warned against the dangers of the industrial revolution for the workers. His theory was largely ignored at the time of writing but by the time ten years had passed, his ideas had become widely accepted, cue Socialism. Marx had felt that the industrial revolution would shorten the gap between the owners of the means of production and the upper classes. A bourgeoisie culture would arise, but if these people were getting richer then the poor would only get poorer. The proletariat as he referred to them, would not benefit from this industrial revolution, the new economic age would only heighten the gap between bourgeois and proletariat. Only a small number of workers would benefit with the revolution, the rest left to become the minority, the 'proles' who had no influence or power, by the early 1850's, the Proletariat had become the largest growing class group in Europe, yet they still held the minority status. Only a small number had joined trade unions, but the reason behind this was that they were illegal in a lot of places. For the Proletariat, any benefits the revolution may hold would have to wait in the future. Marx's ideas would soon become a force in driving the striving proletariat into achieving what they believed to be a healthy state of living. Marx highlighted the fact that throughout the whole of history, the mode of production was decided upon by a small elite who only stood to gain from it, by making themselves in charge and reaping the benefits, whilst the majority of people would tire night and day helping the elite achieve their aims of being richer and more powerful. Marx also wrote on how every system that would take this form would be plagued with conflict, as the rich attempted to exploit the poor. He realised to the people however, that every system that relied so heavily on this exploitation had cracks that could be widened until the system eventually destroyed itself, he felt that Capitalism would eventually 'Choke on it's own wealth'.

Marx felt that once the Capitalist system had destroyed itself, the system would be replaced by a new ideal, of a government run by, and for the people. The oppressed would turn against the oppressors, private ownership would be abolished, industry and commerce would now not be in the business of profit-making, but more to do with producing what was needed to get by. This was prophesied by Marx, who believed it would occur in the most highly advanced and capitalist countries in the west of Europe. This prophecy by Marx is yet to come true, many have tried and failed to instil the ideals, but pure Marxism has yet to be realised. By the many, it is meant that for example in Russia where the Bolsheviks, a Communist group, came to power, the

country that lay before them did not comply with the stringent conditions Marx had laid for the realisation of his theory. Russia at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, was largely a backward country. Many of the citizens were illiterate peasants with no political experience whatsoever, the country had only just shown shades of industrialisation and the economy was in a terrible state. The previous system of government had been the Autocratic Tsarist system, not strictly a Capitalist system, due to the lack of industrialisation. This system of government had weakened after a series of reforms had been demanded, it eventually crumbled away leading a period of political tempest and reformation, this was then succeeded by the revolutions of the Bolsheviks, a group of Russian-Marxist Zealots led by Lenin, they seized power and later became the Communist Party. From the onset the Communist party were faced with a indomitable task, to take a country as backward as Russia and speed up the economy, prepare the people for twentieth century life and later industrialise to a similar level as the rest of Europe, whilst at the same time becoming a military power. Russia had been devastated from World War I and the only way to succeed in bringing any remote prosperity to the land was through a method of rule which involved suppressing individual power and concentrating every into state hands. The result was a term that very much summed up the Communist rule, 'Totalitarianism', in a way this was similar to the autocratic rule of the Tsar, but the consequences were promised to be better than the hardship and backwardness of the nineteenth century. The totalitarian system of government was not quite as apparent under Lenin's rule as his was under his successor's leadership. Such was the totalitarian extent of Jozsef Stalin's rule that many have substituted the word 'Totalitarianism' for 'Stalinism'. The police state was everything, harsh discipline and economic limitations had to be imposed for success purposes. The government had total power, citizens were basically a tool of the state, used for work and as a catalyst to reach the utopian goal. This form of rule however, was in no way the method of reaching the utopia society that Marx had foreseen, there was absolutely no way forward for the people of Russia. This became apparent by the late 1980's, when over thirty years after the death of the tyrant Stalin, the USSR was still managed in an authoritarian method, a huge bureaucratic regime where the people were distanced from the management and the communication routes for individual expression lay false and laden with danger. Official word of the Soviet government however was still promoting the false dream that the Socialist state had been achieved and that pure Communism was only a heartbeat away.

It would not be fair to say that the Bolshevik system had replaced one evil for greater one. Since the second World War, the state of Russia had made huge strides towards security both economically and socially. By the 1980's the USSR had become the world's second highest ranked industrial country, living standards had risen significantly (although still lower than that of the Western Countries), and scientific and technological advances helped illustrate that the government had made good strides into educating a workforce quite capable of intelligent thought. However, coupled with this was the fact that the government was still of totalitarian stock and therefore had only reached the pivotal stage in Marxist theory, the dictatorship of the masses. There was no way that this could have progressed towards the final utopia. By the end of the decade this had finally dawned upon society, Nationalist uprisings throughout the Soviet Bloc, and internal political disagreements led to the final dissolution of the Soviet rule in 1991. The people of the great Soviet Union had been led on too long, they had finally decided that the decades of low economic standards and harsh militarial rule were no longer aimed at reaching the goal, they were just installed now to keep the people quiet. The people were grateful for the changes that had been made but were now impressed by the high standards of living that were rumoured about in the west. When the 'Iron Curtain' finally fell, the state of Eastern Europe was not one of complete turmoil, but the picture painted was of one of hardship, violence and oppression. If this was pure Communism then Capitalism need have very few worries.

If Communism involved a police state and oppression, then at the other end of the scale was liberalism, a political ideal that was the exact opposite, designed to combat these exact values and create a state that was fit for mankind to live in humanely. European Liberalism can be first documented from the time of the French Revolution. The 1789 revolution draws largely upon liberalism as the reason why they are revolting against the oppression and autocratic rule. The classic quote from the 'Declaration of the rights of man and the citizen' reads 'protection of the unprescriptable rights of liberty, security, property and resistance to oppression.' These were basic rights that every man should have, it is a kind of humanitarian 'communism' whereby everybody is equal as a man and everybody is equal in front of the law, regardless of wealth or status. These ideals recurred in every demand by liberals for reform from that moment on.

Following the rise of the new European Middle Classes in the early nineteenth century, a new challenge arose to those who had the power due to being born into the right family.

The educated society outside of nobility were tired of being oppressed in to accepting the 'blue blooded' constitutions that had evolved over centuries. They did not believe in the divine right to rule. They felt that the true way to run a country was through electoral motion, whereby a Parliament of educated and responsible elite took the power away from the 'blue blood' and made democratic decisions over what was right for the country they lived in. Yet because they were not committed revolutionaries intent on causing havoc until their demands were met, they were making very few steps towards achieving their goal of the liberal and Parliamentary society, especially when faced with experienced ministers as Metternich, the 'main man' in the Hapsburg Dynasty of Austria. Their suggestions were constantly laughed off, that was until 1848 when things finally came to a head. Early in this year the revolutions that had been imminent throughout Europe for almost twenty years finally were set into motion. These revolutions had been expected for a long while, the national revolutionaries were the most recognised groups fighting for change. However this time they were joined by a number of Liberal Revolutionary groups. Most of the liberals came from middle-class backgrounds and were businessmen fighting for the right to self-government and personal liberty, demanding that the servant-culture so apparent throughout the monarchical countries be severed and replaced with a freedom of speech for all policy. They managed to turn a few heads when at the end of the revolutions, their manifesto had been well received, and what seemed like a group of almost revolutionaries had managed to alter the course of political, social and economic history forever. However, with hindsight it is noted by major historians that the 1848 revolutions which had seemed so successful were not quite what they were thought to be. Trevelyan writes '1848 was the turning point at which modern history failed to turn.' Recent historians suggest that 1848 did not bring much social and political change, this however is only apparent when looking from a liberal perspective, not from a nationalist view.

In a number of ways liberalism ties in very well with Nationalism and the fact that both had their roots lie in the French Revolution promotes a sense of enormous brotherhood amongst them. The nationalists above all follow the idea that the 'source of all sovereignty lies in the nation', whilst the liberals have an intense dislike of Conservative Foreign powers. The nationalists in this sense were not racially orientated, nor were they into any kind of aggression about expansion and power, they basically wanted the same sort of brotherhood that the liberals wanted. One where the nation treats everybody similarly in the eyes of the law, and a nation where the rule of a number of elite

intelligentsia will work for the greatness of that nations and not for the greatness of themselves.

If liberalism was the glue that helped to initiate the revolutions of 1848, then Nationalism was by far the brush that it was applied with, it was the forerunning catalyst that engaged the need change. It was their campaign that led to the clash with the old orders and eventually caused them to give somewhat. The revolts had started a process of modernisation amongst the European System of governing, some of these changes were not strictly in keeping with the aims of the nationalist idealists. One of the more notable leaps into modernisation was the arrival of the new conservative rulers who realised that to pacify the masses they must appeal to them in a way that would suit their interests. Rulers who had before seen themselves as the divine ruler and kept unquestionable power were now beginning to see the benefits they would receive if they adopted a favourable stance towards nationalism. Before they had been opposed to Nationalism but now they saw it as a way of making the masses accept them as a king or queen, the masses could relate more to a leader if they were seen to be working for the greatness of the country at large, some rulers even went one step further by setting up institution that would now concentrate more power into the citizen's hands. Whilst this was going on, German and Italian middle class liberalists who had failed to realise unification through the use of liberal tactics now turned away from their allegiance in favour of adopting a more nationalist stance. Middle class militants throughout Europe now grew closer intent on securing the goal of Conservative Liberalism and soon the prospect of two new states of Germany and Italy was shining through the previous dark clouds.

In the Italian state of Piedmont, Camillio di Cavour was Prime Minister, he had been implementing economic policies that were proving admirable to the Italians of nearby states. His liberal stance was realised by the calculated leaders of some of the more powerful modernising states throughout Europe. They came to him with a redrawn map of political Europe with an aim of creating a new Kingdom of Italy. He already had the admiration of most nearby Italians, he was then left to use political diplomacy in order to force the Austrians out of Italy, his plans and policies proved successful and the new Italian Kingdom was just about complete when all but two states had joined the kingdom dominated by Piedmont, those two states joined ten years later. His cunning policy had gained him the success in creating a united Italian state, this was the success that had

been eluding the more idealistic nationalists that wished for the same result. The same sort of thing was going on in Germany whereby Prussian Minister-President Otto Von Bismarck, was following similar policies to Cavour and soon had initiated the German state. However, in contrast to Cavour, Bismarck had won mass support for his king and together they devised a type of Nationalism that was more conservative and incorporated Bourgeois economics and popular authoritarianism. This conservative Nationalism allowed Bismarck to modernise the economy and constitution in Germany without having to become a liberal. Once these states were achieving political modernity the whole of Europe began a process of economic modernisation. This allowed the already industrialised states to become highly industrial, and also for the rest to join the industrial revolution.

These changes in political styles of governing allowed the way for new breakthroughs in science and technology. Major breakthroughs in natural science coincided with the idea that science was now the way to answer all theoretical questions about life, humanity and other relevant topics. No longer the romanticism of the philosophical answers, idealism was now a thing of the past and the stage was set for the realist attitude that had been sweeping European politics to become the new and socially approved way of thinking.

Nationalism provided the chance for members of the old order to restructure the way that they governed their lands, the people had called for change and conservative nationalism had provided the answer. However with Nationalism came the patriotic idea, and the danger that lay within this idea was that it could become too fierce. This did indeed happen and the resulting political ideal was perhaps the most dangerous we have seen throughout history, Fascism. The basic concept of Fascism was to ensure a process of regeneration in the areas of the social, economic and cultural ways of life through the concept of ethnic belonging and identity. Fascism was a strictly conflict theory and quite violently rejected liberal ideas such as freedom of expression and individual rights. The way Fascism works is that it is so extremely nationalist that it often leads to wars and destruction.

The concept of Fascism really only arose in the early part of the twentieth century, even though it was not widely popular, there was usually a Fascist group operating in every country of any significance. The key to Fascist success lay within the mass destruction and suffering that had occurred in World War I, coupled with this physical devastation a

number of countries were also in the middle of political upheaval. The fierce patriotism that resulted would be played upon by the Fascist groups. However it is safe to say that with the quite notable exceptions of Germany and Italy, Fascism in itself never managed to do much in the rest of Europe. In both Italy and Germany the Fascist movements managed to manoeuvre themselves into power, which would last until the end of World War II. The result as we know is a period of intense totalitarian rule that would lead to the deaths of millions of people. It seems easy to write but it is almost impossible to get across on paper exactly how intense this Fascist-era was.

The major Fascist force throughout Europe was the Nazi Party in Germany, although Mussolini was the founder of the ideal and the first leader, he was in effect extremely weak and ineffective. Hitler's Germany on the other hand was a well-oiled Fascist bandwagon that kept going from strength to strength. Hitler's plans to destroy an old and unfit Germany and replace it with the most potent nation in the world was no secret. Through the abolition of democracy and such institutions causing a person to choose, Hitler's Nazis managed to remove anything that would cause National divisions. The replacement was the implementation of the Third Reich ideal, something that the German's as a people could work towards, the core and the roots of the new healthy Germany. The Third Reich promoted German culture, youth and its importance to securing future strength and above all an allegiance to the Aryan ideal both physically and mentally. Nazism used this ethnic ideal to create its foreign policy, this was the same foreign policy that would lead to world war. Firstly it involved the unification of all German's into a mother country, then once that objective had been fulfilled they would initiate the imperial policy of a Nazified Europe free from all racial enemies. It was this myth of Nazi superiority that really appealed the Germans as a people. Nazi literature would write of scientific proof that Natural Selection had led the Aryan to becoming the most advanced race on Earth, this theory of Social-Darwinism also prescribed that the Jewish race were the 'primates on the chart', the least evolved of all races, and it was this that was supposed to excuse the barbaric nature with which they were dealt with. This culturally based belief was one of the two most significant parts of Nazism as a political ideal. The second was the development of a modern economic structure and a modern social stratification system. Even after the devastating terms of the Treaty of Versailles, German society was still one of the most advanced in the world. The Governmental infrastructure was superior and the standards of education and living really were good in context. Coupled with the huge economic potential of industry

Germany were still near the top of the power structure in Europe. One advantage that the German's had, was their deep belief in culture and identity. They respected their history and had utmost respect for great Germans, this is why they were not really ready for democracy. They had been living under Autocratic rule for a long time and to simply adjust is not as easy as it sounds, it was almost inevitable that a dictatorship be formed as the people were more or less crying out for it.

Hitler's take on Fascism was far more extreme and committed than that of Mussolini's. The German had a great deal more commitment to the Totalitarian principle, the race based ideology. Mussolini on the other hand was a little more liberal and didn't really have a watertight plan as to his aims. This is not to say that the Italian was not committed, and Italian Fascism is still radical. In Italy Fascism was far less effective than in Germany and it did not really enter into peoples lives as much as the German take on it. However the two ideals came together when it came to overall aims, for Italy the idea was a rebirth of the Roman empire that once had made Italy so great; for Germany the concept was the re-aryanisation of Europe to create the ideal national community. Vitaly important to both states were the state economies. Germany's economy had been struggling since the double impact of the Ruhr crisis and the Wall Street Crash, she had been keeping extremely low reserves of foreign currency and her Balance of Payments was in drastic deficit. However, the Nazis employed Schacht to control the economy, he was a supremely efficient economist and by clever manipulation managed to produce impressive and more than stable results. The Italian economy on the other hand was fluctuating between 'bad' and 'worse' when Mussolini and his crew took charge. Mussolini took on board his own concept of the 'corporate state', whereby socio-economic classes lived and ruled themselves in harmony. The 'corporate state' however was merely a myth and the result was that behind it Mussolini was approving economic supremacy for propertied interest. The plan for it to yield prosperity for all was ludicrous. The Nazi party were also in the business of creating a huge social change throughout Germany, this was a plan to create a harmonious people who would stay allied to the cause. This was not quite as important as the economic program but no less effort went into it to ensure that it was successful. The truth is however that no matter how hard they tried the Nazis could not attain the social revolution they wished for. In the end they had to settle for a contented society, not one who were happy all the time with the government. One thing that they did manage though was the near elimination of unemployment, this was a minor miracle in itself, especially considering that in 1929

almost 6 million Germans were receiving no salary at all. The rise in production and sales figures for consumer goods in the early thirties suggest a rise in the standard of living. Because of the lack of commitment in Italy, the Fascist period for them was one of a decline in living standards, researchers have found it hard to put an accurate estimate on the extent of the decline, but one of the best estimates is that a farm labourer lost half of the value of his real wages in the period 1929-1937. One thing that the Fascists did give was a range of benefits for the worker, such as sick pay, holiday pay, severance pay and end of year bonuses. Many of these benefits were important to the Fascists and their success is easy to see as most are still in use today in all industrial countries.

Over the past 150 years, it is quite clear that some of the political ideas have in some way or another influenced the change and development that has occurred in society. Some have influenced society in a positive way, whilst others have perhaps added a negativity to society. Socialism has helped highlight the fact that it is easy for Capitalist systems to neglect and exploit the worker. The reaction to this has been to make a number of reforms and draw up a list of workers rights. If Socialism had not been realised then even today we may still see men growing extremely rich upon the exploitative toils of the common worker. As it is men do grow rich off of workers toils but the exploitation is certainly not considered a regular problem in European society. The extremity of Socialism, Communism however has illustrated that attempts to create utopian societies are more or less in vain as human nature dictates that the equality and economic similarity cannot be achieved. Liberalism and Nationalism are perhaps the most influential political ideals that have come about in the last century and a half. They have helped design the standard style of government for contemporary society, whereby democracy prevails and the issues of the masses are dealt with in a way that best suits them by people they have elected to represent them. The Nationalist approach has seen the modernisation of economies and encouraged all European countries to industrialise. This has been for the good of all as a more stable economy creates greater employment and subsequently a better standard of living. The Fascist and Nazi dawns have obviously shed a darker light on the development of society. They have shown how barbaric people can really be, however had they not occurred then society would be a different place. They have helped show that in a multi-cultural society extreme racism is not acceptable, and hopefully with the disastrous consequences they inflicted upon themselves, they will have dissuaded people today who may have the urge to try and

take over Europe. The basic underlying theme is that without these ideals then the world as we know it today would be different, our economies have been modernised by them, our living standards have been raised by them and our political influence has been greatedened by them, these are the three most significant changes they have influenced and the fact they have covered social, economic and political factors is an example of how important the development of new political theories and ideals is. What these political ideals have left us with is the latest theory, and the one that many societies use today, Liberal-Capitalism is believed to be the end of history. The way in which free market business is encouraged, yet the exploitation of the common worker is not the norm. Whether this is the end of history is yet to be determined, for we don't know whether Marx's pure, utopian Communist society will happen, or whether a Fascist regime that has all the appeal to control Europe could occur. In my opinion these ideals have contributed to the development of the fairest society possible today, but tomorrow who knows?

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