I

Ideocracy as a Distinctive Form of Politics

What Is Ideocracy?

Ideocracy is a political system whose activities are pursued in reference to the tenets of a monistic ideology. More specifically, the legitimacy of the political system is derived from the monistic ideology, which establishes a universal frame of reference for the participants of the system.

The concept of ideocracy combines two root terms: *cracy* and *ideo*. *Cracy* is a Greek word meaning political rule. *Ideo* derives from ideology. Hence ideocracy involves political rule in the name of a monistic ideology. We may define *ideology* as an integrated set of assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a general program for the organization of social life.[1] It contains a view of the past, the present, and the future from which the program of political action is derived. Of course, every society and every political system operates in reference to some political ideology and an array of related beliefs, however imperfectly these may be defined. For example, the American political system involves a set of generally held beliefs that encourage a selective interpretation of history, present day reality, and the principles on which the system is founded. In the American case, this set of

beliefs includes such concepts as rule by the people, government through law, the inalienable rights of human beings, the triumph of democracy, and so on. The conflict over the meaning of these beliefs and their application has abounded throughout American history.

But the ideology of ideocracy is of a specific character—it is monistic. Monism is the doctrine that reality may be understood as one unitary, indivisible whole; thus a monistic ideology posits that this reality can be interpreted by a universally true and exhaustive system of ideas. Although other ideologies are partial in their interpretative scope and tentative in their explanation of reality, a monistic ideology claims to be comprehensive and absolute. It presumes to explain *all* aspects of reality. In this regard, it rejects any separation between different realms of human behavior, including the separation of political, social, economic, ethical, and aesthetical spheres of human endeavor. Therefore the political sphere is seen to subsume all other spheres of society. Monism likewise rejects the need for tentative assumptions in the face of complexity and instead asserts an absolute knowledge of reality that overrides any more immediate sense of uncertainty.[2]

The legitimacy of an ideocratic system derives from the principles of its monistic ideology. It is assumed that the decision makers of the system have a strictly defined framework of reference that allows them an absolutely correct interpretation of events. Thus, their decisions are infallible. What sets ideocracy apart from other kinds of political systems is the fact that it claims to derive the legitimacy of specific programs of action *exclusively* from the tenets of the ideology itself. By contrast, in other systems the justifi-

cation for political action involves reference not only to a specific ideology but also to standards stemming from other sets of rules—for example, norms governing ethical conduct, scientific inquiry, and artistic creation—norms derived from distinct realms of human behavior.[3]

Ideocracy Distinguished

Extending upon the previous discussion, a fundamental distinction may be made between ideocracy and all other political systems (see Figure I.1, classification of political systems). Thus, two polar types of polities are identified: the first, which we have termed *ideocratic*; the second, which may be called *pluralistic*. We have already defined *ideocracy*. Pluralistic polities conversely are all those systems that tolerate competing ideologies and other schemes of thought not withstanding adherence to a general ideology that supports the organization of the political system. This apparent contradiction is possible because the general ideology is not viewed as an absolute and comprehensive truth, as it is in an ideocracy.

FIGURE I.1

Classification of Political Systems

System of Beliefs	*Type of Political System*
Monism	Ideocracy
Limited Pluralism	Authoritarianism
Pluralism	Democracy

Note: By *democracy*, we mean a political system in which top political decision makers are chosen through election by the citizens, political participation is open to diverse and competing groups; and the rights of individuals are grounded in an established legal order.

Pluralism is commonly associated with participatory democracy. In fact this is not always the case. Indeed one can easily think of authoritarian systems that are somewhat pluralistic. They are characterized by a centralized political realm that is relatively uninvolved with many other spheres of human behavior. Most dictatorships and oligarchies fall in this category. We may also recognize an authoritarian form of political pluralism in which there exist many centers of political control, each characterized by its internal authoritarianism; for example, the feudal systems of medieval Europe and Japan. It is possible to distinguish various forms and degrees of pluralism in different authoritarian systems.[4] Thus authoritarian systems may be seen to fall on a continuum between ideocracy and democracy involving, as Juan Linz has suggested: "limited but not responsible political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology but with distinctive mentalities, without intensive or extensive political mobilization . . . and in which a leader, or occasionally a small group, exercise power within formally ill-defined, but actually quite predictable limits."[5]

Although authoritarian regimes exercise centralized power, which may be more or less culturally legitimized, they lack the ideological scope of ideocracies or their drive to mobilize the entire population.

Two ideal types of ideocracy may also be distinguished. Many modern ideocracies have been totalitarian, with extensive physical control functions and the widespread use of political terror, as in the cases of Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union.[6] While not denying the validity of the totalitarian variant, we would argue that there is another valid type of ideocracy—the populist ideocracy. This latter kind derives

its voluntary acceptance from a high level of support for a commonly held monistic ideology. Some small, relatively isolated systems best approximate this type; for example, Calvinist Geneva, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.[7] Further, as will be clarified later, mature modern ideocracies tend to become less totalitarian and more populist.

It should be clear from this discussion that ideocracy is based upon the existence of a monistic ideology and not upon a specific structure of political control within a political system. Therefore we have both totalitarian and populist variants of ideocracy, one essentially coercive and the other consensual, just as we have both authoritarian and democratic pluralistic systems.

Intellectual Origins of Ideocracy

Because ideocracies concern themselves with the existence of the absolute truth, they are in some ways similar to organized religions. Indeed, for some ideocracies, a fundamentalist religion forms the base for the monistic ideology upon which the system rests.[8] In both types of ideocracies, secular and religious, a considerable portion of the tenets must be accepted on faith. Only then may the rest of the system be logically deduced.[9] For example, an acceptance on faith of a specific view of historical necessity may lead logically to an attempt to create a particular social structure foreordained in that history; for example, a racially stratified political system may be sought because of a faith in the superior role of one chosen race (e.g., Nazi Germany).[10] Likewise, in a religion, belief in God may lead to social action intended to exemplify the believer's state of grace. But ideocracy

goes beyond traditional religion. Whereas the religiously faithful adhere to their beliefs as individuals and as a collective body of believers, the faithful of ideocracy seek to *enforce* their views throughout a politically governed territory. Religious views may be spread by teaching and by example, whereas ideocratic views are backed by political action to enforce them, as well.[11] Ideocracy typically involves either fusion of religious and political beliefs, as in the case of some militant religious regimes, or the substitution of secular ideology for religious belief. Indeed some have called ideocracies *secular religions.*[12] The classical examples of ideocracies (Sparta, Calvinist Geneva, Commonwealth of Massachusetts) as well as contemporary Islamic fundamentalist regimes (Iran and Sudan), have involved the fusion of religion and politics. In these societies, social and political organization has been designed to achieve salvation for the participants. Most of the contemporary Western or Western-type ideocracies, however, have been of the secular form, substituting historical ideology—completely (Marxism) or partially (fascism)—for transcendental religious beliefs. In these, the ultimate goal of an earthly utopia have replaced heavenly salvation.

A general secularization of politics and society has occurred in the Western or Westernized societies with the advancement of technology and science. In these societies, the religious content of earlier political ideologies does not appeal to the typical audiences, who are more interested in economic and social advancement than in eternal salvation. The underlying scientific revolution has encouraged reliance on theories relating to the scientific method of inquiry and stressing innovative, rational problem solving. Secularized masses see the tangible results of technological and scientific

progress. Increasingly, they expect political leaders to *engineer* clear-cut solutions to perceived social problems. No longer are they willing to accept references to the supernatural as justification for the real or imagined frustration of their desires. Hence, more contemporary Westernized ideocracies have employed ideologies that focus upon a monistic historical explanation of reality and contain a claim of scientific truth (communism, Ba'th socialism in the Middle East). Thus, the superiority of a particular ideocratic creed is justified by historical and pseudo-scientific evidence and not by a reference to the favor of God.

In the non-Western world, however, there is often a negative reaction to the secular influences of modernization and a revival of traditional values. This is clearly rooted in tradition and derives from sacred roots in the society. At the same time it selectively incorporates aspects of modern society, such as a communication network, mass propaganda, technology, and international economic connections, although it does so by severely subordinating these to the strictures of a religious creed. The result is an ideocracy rooted in the mass politics of the nation state, as are other modern ideocracies, but one that draws deeply on the premodern traditions and beliefs.[13] For example, the ideocratic creed on which Islamic fundamentalist regimes are based promises heavenly salvation and an earthly utopia. Strongly anti-Western, its message claims modernization leading to economic prosperity to be possible only within the prescriptions of Islam. This skillful blend of the traditional and the modern lends to its popularity among the Muslim masses and many of its intellectuals.

This is not to suggest that the secular ideologies are devoid of idealism. The followers are still expected

to sacrifice for an ultimate perfection, which, it is claimed, will benefit the future generations. A metaphysical belief in the attainment of this future utopia lends a sacred quality to the ideocratic system of beliefs, creating thereby a secular religion.[14] Faith, grace, evil, and divine inspiration all have a place within the earthly historical drama. With the forces of good pitted against evil, the followers are expected to have faith in the righteousness of the ideocratic cause and in the divine inspiration of their leaders.[15] Ironically, the masses are again asked to sacrifice, now in the name of an earthly utopia rather than heavenly salvation, or in some cases both. All of this exemplifies the character of ideocracy, which combines a sense of religious dedication with a belief in the attainment of ultimate material goals. Hence, there are two kinds of ideological support for ideocracy—one strongly religious (e.g., Islamic fundamentalism) and the other based on historicism and science (e.g., Marxism or fascism).

It is often argued that totalitarian political systems result from the development of contemporary technology and the mass society.[16] Obviously, what we choose to call *ideocracy* existed before the industrial revolution as well. One must not deny, however, the profound impact of industrialization and the advancement of technology on all human societies and political systems. Urbanization, as a by-product of industrialization, has brought masses of people together. Rapid transportation and broadly developed mass communication have extended the mass public to the countryside as well. Urban and rural masses have become aware of contemporary events occurring not only in their immediate communities but throughout the world at large.[17] A century ago, the average

Indian villagers never expected to travel more than 20 miles from their places of inhabitancy and seldom met anybody from beyond this distance. Naturally, their social and political perspective was limited primarily to events occurring within that realm. Today, for better or worse, the transistor radio, movies, and increasingly television now bring them news and pictures from Paris, London, Moscow, Teheran, and Peking, opening their imagination to the world beyond. Formal education further contributes to this process. Mass transportation likewise increases their chances of travel in that broader world.

All of these developments lead to mass politics. Mass support can be generated—through communication and social interaction—from distant centers of political power.[18] The legitimacy of a political regime can be inculcated in a broad mass of followers. On the other hand, these same conditions enhance the capacity of revolutionary movements to develop geographically extended bases of mass support.[19] For these and other reasons, the masses cannot be ignored.

Except for the very smallest, political systems of the past involved the exclusive participation of small elites (nobility, mandarins, intelligentsia). Large authoritarian political systems of the past mobilized such specific elites only, leaving other strata of population uninvolved and unpenetrated ideologically, although they were controlled politically by the elites. In a sense, some of these were partially developed ideocracies, in that the elites were mobilized in reference to a monistic ideology.[20] However, the fully developed ideocracies of this earlier period were set apart from these larger political systems. They were small, highly mobilized communities, sharply isolated from

contact with other social systems. Most primitive social systems were of this sort—tribes with fused religious and political organization, an integrated tribal world-view, and belief in a sacred status separating them from the rest of humanity.[21] Some early ideocracies were also formed by intense religious groups, which turned away from larger political systems in efforts to create isolated religious utopias.[22]

The rise of the masses is necessary as a precondition to mass politics, both pluralistic and ideocratic. This helps to explain similarities seen by some between mass democracies and modern ideocracies. The fact remains that the industrial revolution brought the masses into the political realm with the consequence that highly dynamic modern political systems must mobilize their support. In this sense all mass political systems involve broader patterns of political participation; however, this does not negate the fundamental distinction between pluralistic and ideocratic systems, which is rooted in ideological differences between the two systems.[23] The ideologies of pluralistic democracies explicitly recognize the legitimacy of diverse groups of participants and different realms of social life outside the sway of political control. Modern ideocracies bring all facets of social life within the scope of legitimate political control. Moreover, extended ideocracies of the modern world mobilize their masses with powerful monistic ideologies that pervade their systems of communications.

Organic and Mechanical (Pragmatic) Concepts of the State

Throughout history human beings have often asked, What is the state and why should I obey it?

Their primary allegiances have usually been given to their community; so, their answers to these questions have involved their conception of the relationship of the state to this community. Basically, there are two general conceptions of that relationship—one is organic, the other mechanical (pragmatic).[24]

The organic concept views the state is an extension of the community, and because the community (society, nation) itself is regarded as a living organism, the state also assumes organic qualities and becomes the organized expression of the whole. The community is seen as a collective body, with a continuation of its life through generations, and not merely as an aggregation of distinct individuals and groups. Whatever meaning individuals possess, they derive from this enveloping organic community. To express this vividly, the individual is to the community (and hence, to the state) as a finger is to the human body. The finger's meaning derives from the functions it performs for the body, in its organic unity with the body. The finger severed from the hand becomes a useless, dead object. Equally, individuals separated from their society (physically or psychologically) lose their *human meaning*, even if they continue to exist physically. To a degree, all theories of community have some organic characteristics; however, our discussion focuses upon the additional conception of state as the embodiment of that organism. Indeed, some conservative democratic theories view society as an organic entity but envision a limited role for government, which places them clearly in democratic tradition.

The mechanical (pragmatic) concept envisions the state as a mechanical device—an artificial creation—constructed by groups of individuals for specific purposes.[25] Individuals are not totally subsumed within

the community, nor is the state the organic embodiment of that community. Hence individuals or groups of individuals can claim civil rights protecting them against the state. Although in the organic view the state is all-embracing, in the mechanical it is particular and limited in its purpose: the private realm of activity stands separate from and coequal with the public realm. Because of its limited purpose, the state must compete with other social organizations seeking the allegiance of the individual. By now it should be obvious to the reader that the organic concept of the society and the state is most consistent with the ideocratic form of politics. The mechanical view of society is more clearly at odds with monistic ideology.

Politics and Problem Solving

The techniques of problem solving in our two kinds of political systems, ideocratic and pluralistic, differ quite basically. In ideocracy, all techniques must be justified, in the last analysis, by reference to a monistic ideology. No sphere of specialized human activity is strictly neutral in relation to the all-embracing concept of reality. All problem solving techniques must be ideologically correct; that is, they must conform to the general ideological frame of reference. To some degree, realms of expertise will still have their own set of techniques and rules. However, their final product must be compatible with the tenets of the monistic ideology. On occasion, of course, the two will be found in conflict, and then the techniques themselves will be held to be ideologically deviant. To a considerable extent, the freedom of inquiry will be impaired, as the experts attempt to confine themselves to techniques that will produce ideologically accept-

able solutions. Still, ideocratic politics does encourage concentrated problem-solving efforts, and hence it is often characterized by a spectacular growth in limited ideologically acceptable areas, while little or sharply confined attention is given to ideologically troublesome problem areas.[26]

In pluralistic politics no overall comprehensive ideology determines the legitimacy of all problem-solving efforts. The rules of the different spheres of inquiry are derived from their own specialized sets of principles. And therefore, science relies primarily on the tenets of scientific inquiry and is influenced only indirectly by other spheres of human concern, such as morality and politics. The products of science will still be judged by their usefulness to society, but the techniques of scientific activity will be evaluated by a different set of principles, including, of course, the ethical standards of the society, but only in regard to the most fundamental social conventions. The problem solvers are less constrained by the ideological considerations; rather, they are subject to standards and pressures derived from sets of principles appropriate to the subject matter. These principles develop within various areas of specialization within the pluralistic system. In this system, problem solving follows many avenues and is characterized by a wide dispersion of efforts. This is why the pluralistic systems are often seen as slow moving, although in fact they are highly flexible; for, diverse streams of problem-solving activity are only poorly related to each other.[27] Ideocratic systems are characterized by ideologically stimulated and constrained problem-solving activity. Pluralistic systems display a diversity in their problem-solving efforts that reflects the variety of coexisting standards on which the whole concept of pluralism is based.

Community and Ideology

The organic concept of community, which is philosophically crucial in ideocracy, not only conceives of the individual as an inseparable element of society, but equally important, conceptualizes society itself as absolutely distinct and separate from other societies. It stresses the unique characteristics of each fundamental social group into which the whole of humanity is divided. Further, the monistic ideology of an ideocratic system identifies its own community as a sacred collectivity, superior to other communities, which are regarded as either lower or often perverted forms of human existence (e.g., the master race of Aryans in Nazi ideology or Umma Moslemhood in Islamic fundamentalism).[28] Because ideocracy possesses this chosen quality, it has an undeniable historical mission to perform—at the least, to defend its own specific identity, or at best, to lead part or all of humanity to salvation as it defines this.

The pluralistic society, on the other hand, regards its community as an assemblage of groups, outside as well as inside the political community. These groups are related to one another by the possibility of mutual membership and overlapping concerns and by the mobility of individuals between the groups. Also the community is not an absolutely exclusive entity, because individuals and groups are permitted to divide their loyalties among different communities. In special circumstances they can transfer from one community to another, as for example in emigration.[29] No organization in the pluralistic community demands absolute loyalty of the individual in all aspects of one's behavior. The pluralistic community has of course an historical identity, but this identity is similar to that of

other communities. Hence, the community has no basis for claiming a unique and superior historical mission, which it must perform.[30]

The essence of the pluralistic community is the recognition that the membership in it is created primarily by law or voluntary association and does not basically derive from biological origin or ideological identification.[31] This is expressed well in the Roman concept of citizenship, in which community membership depends on legal status and is dissolved by specified legal processes. Citizenship in this perspective, involves a limited association between the individual and the political community. In ideocracy, full membership is more fundamental, because it embraces the individual as a whole and involves a fusion of the individual and the community. The membership of the community is considered to be historically determined, because one is either born into the organic community or merges with it in response to historical or supernatural forces recognized within the monistic ideology. This process may involve individual conversion, but even this conversion is seen as preordained. Some participants straddle the gap between membership and nonmembership. Their historically defined characteristics are held to be such that they waiver between alliance with, and opposition toward, the ideocratic community.[32] At best, they may attain a partial, lesser membership in that community. Their impurity is such that they may, at any time, turn against the community.

Ideocratic communities are organized through one of four ideological sources of membership: the Nation, the Race, the Class, and the Culture.[33]

Membership in the national form of ideocracy derives from a combination of biological, cultural, and

geographic characteristics that together make the individual a natural element of the national community. Individuals are regarded as members to the *degree* that they possesses these characteristics (e.g., in Fascist Italy).[34]

Racial ideocracy is founded on a common biological heritage. Persons are born as members of *the* superior, or of some inferior, race. In some circumstances, they may be acceptable to the racial community even if they are not of absolutely pure blood, but their level of perfection is only as great as their degree of racial purity. Therefore, those of impure blood can have only a limited membership[35] (e.g., in Nazi Germany).

Class-based ideocracy utilizes the economic division of labor (differentiation) of society for its definition of the membership. Individuals are members of an economic class because of their specific relation to the social forces of production in the division of labor. For example, if they contribute to production as workers, they belong to the working class as defined by the ideology (e.g., all communist ideocracies).[36]

Membership in the cultural ideocracy is not so easy to specify, because culture is difficult to define. Basically, it refers here to the set of socially transmitted ideas about what is characteristic of "a people."[37] Typically this set of ideas involves only part of the social life of the participants. However, in the ideocratic system, culture is considered to be all embracing in the sense that it provides a basis for the complete identification of the individual, the people, and the community. In other words, individuals are what they are because of their essential cultural identity. But because they are normally born into a culture, cultural ideocracy contains strong overtones of bio-

logical (race) community. Indeed, a cultural ideocracy often refers to itself as the *Volk community*. Various cultural ideocracies emphasize different aspects of culture, such as religion (e.g., in the Islamic republics of Iran and Sudan),[38] education or technological advancement (e.g., Republic of South Africa at the height of apartheid).[39] Philosophically, although not always in practice, the superiority of the community is held to derive from the superiority of its culture. Theoretically, other communities might eventually attain the same level, but at the present time they remain inferior. The culturally advanced community has the obligation of leadership and example, while at the same time it must be concerned with its own purity, which must not be compromised.

Ideocracy Described

Ideocracy is a political system that derives its legitimacy from the tenets of a monistic ideology. This monistic ideology presumes to explain all aspects of reality and requires the subordination of all realms of human behavior. The ideocratic decision makers rely on a general framework of strictly defined rules and hence claim the right to infallibility. Although ideocracy tends toward total control, not all ideocracies are coercive; in fact, some are consensual. In terms of intellectual roots, ideocracy can be compared with traditional religion. In both, the "Truth" should be realized within their realm, but ideocracy merges absolutist religious beliefs with political control over a territory. Many ideocracies involve complete or partial fusion between religion and a historical doctrine. The general secularization of many of the Western societies has led to the emergence of a number of secular

ideocracies. They engage in the drive toward earthly utopias, which derive from secular metaphysical principles similar in many ways to the metaphysics of religion. This metaphysical character is also expressed in the supernatural qualities ascribed to their organic community. However, the recent appearance of fundamentalist regimes and movements in the Islamic world has led to the revival of religious ideocracy.

Ideocracies are found throughout the course of history. Many folk communities have had ideocratic characterisitcs, as have some intense religious sects that have attempted to leave broader societies to establish isolated self-governing communities. Furthermore, there have been partial ideocracies, which mobilized limited elites only, as in the apartheid Republic of South Africa. Most contemporary ideocracies, as all modern political systems, must rely on and therefore mobilize the masses. The use of technology in these contemporary ideocracies is critical, but it is no less vital to their operation than is the case in modern pluralistic political systems. In general, ideocracy is characterized by ideologically stimulated and constrained problem-solving activity throughout its society. In many ways this results from the view that ideocratic society is absolutely distinct and separate from other human groups, by virtue of the superiority of its nation, race, class, or culture. Such superiority imposes on the ideocratic society an historic mission; at best to lead humanity to a glorious future, at worst to defend its own purity. Therefore, individuals must subjugate all aspects of their behavior to the superior ideocratic goal. For, the sacrifice of their potentially deviant personal freedom creates the conditions by which the whole group can attain the freedom to perform its historic mission.