

Exploratory paper on political ideology history essay



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Political ideology is defined as a set of ideals and principles created for social order. Thus, after much consideration and deliberation, I chose to work on Political Ideology.

Politics appeals to me because I have been intrigued by how it can inspire the masses with powerful rhetoric's by charismatic personalities. President Barack Obama is a political leader whom I greatly admire for his oratory eloquence displayed during his maiden speeches in the U. S. Presidential Elections 2008. I was captivated by his " Yes We Can!" speech which moves the crowd to disperse all doubts about their future and believing that America will succeed under his leadership.

Marxism-Leninism and Maoism are communism by nature but takes on a different form to cater to the circumstances in their respective countries, Russia and China.

Marxism-Leninism is a political ideology that is based on Valdimir Lenin's writing on the ideas of Karl Marx. Marxism advocates socialism while being heavily critical on capitalism which he believes is the " dictatorship of the bourgeoisie", which means a society run by the upper echelons of society to their own benefit. His idea of socialism is that the society will be run by the working class known as the " dictatorship of the proletariat". Marx's ideas were heavily influenced by the class struggle in society.

One significant event that epitomises Marxism-Leninism ideology would be the 1917 October revolution in Petrograd, currently known as St. Petersburg. Valdimir Lenin was the leader of the Bolshevik (communist) Party that

toppled the Russian Provisional government and created a new form of Russia called Soviet Russia which borrowed Marxism ideologies along with it.

The Bolshevik won over the support of the majority of the workers and soldiers because of the repressive and autocratic ruling by the imperialist Tsar which resulted in declining economic and social conditions. The working class was unhappy with long working hours, overcrowded housing problems with poor sanitary control, low wages which was made worst by increases in cost of living due to Russia's involvement in World War one at that time. Thus Lenin-led Bolshevik appealed to the masses and faced little resistance when they staged a coup, occupying government buildings and strategic points.

In China, Maoism is a political ideology that straddles along the Marxism-Leninist line. Peasants and farming forms the fundamental and building blocks of a socialist society. The difference between Lenin's Russia and Mao's China is dictatorship of the working class while another is the dictatorship of the peasants.

Mao Zedong rise to the top of the Chinese Communist Party was nothing short of spectacular. He was a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 and was actively involved in spreading Marxist ideas to the peasants in his hometown of Hunan Province. The most significant event in the history of communist China is The Long March in 1934-1935. During the Zunyi conference, Zhou Enlai was ousted as the Chief Political Officer of the party while Mao Zedong was elected Chairman of the Politburo with backings from the military leaders and he has never relinquished his position since.

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Mao Zedong was credited for unifying China as a People's Republic and away from imperialism (Qing Dynasty) and feudalism (War-Lords). Also, the Long March gave the Chinese Communist Party the reputation that they are willing to endure hardship for the people and to formulate policies on land reform that would reduce the plight of Chinese peasants thus gaining wide support from the peasants.

Another difference from Marxism-Leninism is the deep belief that man can prevail in harsh conditions and achieved things through strong willpower. He personally pushed through this ideology during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) and the Cultural Revolution (1968-1976). Maoism ideologies can also be found in Peru and Nepal.

Locally, Singapore also had brushes with communist in the past. The Barisan Socialis was a former left-wing political party formed in 1961 by former members of the PAP (People's Action Party) and led by Dr Lee Siew Choh and Lim Chin Siong. The party was accused by the PAP to be a communist front and deemed a threat to national security which resulted in many Barisan Socialis members arrested and imprisoned without trial during operation coldstore by the internal security department.

Singapore, widely regarded as a democratic society, would be understandably not be tolerant of the Barisan Socialis, supposedly advocates of communism since that would be conflict of political ideologies. However, based on an extract below, I felt that it could be reasons of a partisan nature.

In a recently declassified Colonial office papers, Baron Philip Moore, who was Deputy High Commissioner of Britain in Singapore from 1963 to 1965, was quoted as saying:

“ He (Lee) went on to suggest that in order to avoid the Communists taking over, he would create a situation in which the UK Commissioner would be force to suspend the Constitution. This might be done either by the Singapore Government inviting a Russian trade mission to Singapore thus forcing a constitutional crisis, or by instigating riots and disorder, requiring the intervention of British troops. I did however, form the impression that he was quite certain he would lose a general election and was seriously toying with the thought of forcing British intervention in order to prevent his political enemies from forming a government. (CO 1030/1149 p. 95, para 3)”

In history, after revolutions for a change in political ideology, there would be power struggle for leadership as can be seen in the Chinese Communist Party. Mao Zedong wiped out all that threatens his position as leader and started the Cultural Revolution. In the Soviet Union, after Lenin's death, Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky fought for power to lead. In the end, Stalin ordered the assassination of Trotsky.

The lesson to be learned from history is that power struggles for leadership happens before, during and after a revolution. Leaders clinging to power would use all means to consolidate their status by eliminating political rivals. It is no difference regardless of political ideologies.