

# IDEOLOGIES OF US POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON DOMESTIC ISSUES OF AMERICA

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## Abstract

*Ideology plays a vital role in forming the policies at foreign as well as at the domestic level of states. In the US, the two ideologies are more dominant Liberal and Conservative, which have strong effects on international and external relations of US. This article based on the comparative analysis of Republican and Democratic parties policies at the domestic level of US. Both rule opposite to each other when are in power. Death rate, violence, and unemployment rate mount during Republican government than Democrats. Its major reason is; Republican follows conservative ideology and Democrats' liberal. And their economic policies also vary based on their ideologies. These ideologies are not newly emerged but have deep roots in the US history after independence, emerged as a result of a clash between Jefferson and Hamilton.*

**Key Words:** Republican, Democrats, Ideology, Liberal, Conservative, Polarization, Violent Death, Epidemic.

## Introduction

Ideology is a very difficult term to understand because mostly political scientists cannot agree on whether ideology is a negative, positive or neutral outlook of any society. In political term, theory gives us a statement of objectives by which to evaluate our accomplishments and by which to guide our actions. Political policy, without any theory, can be fickle and shortsighted. Further ideology is used to persuade individuals to accomplish the interests of the state. Therefore, mostly political analysis to readily agree that ideology is an important factor in our lives. Michael Hunt writes, "Ideologies elucidate complex realities and reduce them to understandable and manageable term" (Hunt, 2009, p. 16). Another scholar Thomas Sowell describes ideology as "an almost intuitive sense of what things are and how they work" (Sowell, 2009, p. 230).

In international world politics or at the domestic level of states several ideologies represent the state and its society according to its culture, norms values, and religions. For example, mostly Middle East states followed Islamic ideology, Western states known as liberal ideology. In the sense of state behavior, states follow the realist or idealist attitudes which represent the particular ideology of state and society.

At the international level states may be considered as a single ideological state but on the domestic level, several ideologies are lies. Modern societies are complex and often contradictory and within a society, individuals may not follow a single ideology; they may become fully attached to a single ideological system, or they may appropriate parts of several ideologies. L.T Sargent argues that ideologies are simplistic in their approach to problem solving. He writes that ideology “provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and, in so doing .... organizes the tremendous complexity of the world into something fairly simple and understandable” (Sargent, 1972, p. 1).

So, political parties of state, which have great importance in any government system also represent the particular ideological group in the society. For example, in Pakistan, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) mostly favourable for the interests of fuddles, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) known as industrialists party; in America, Republican Party denoted with conservatives ideas and support the Northern rich, business class Americans, on the other hand, Democrats are liberal and support the Southern, agriculture agencies and poor American parts. These ideological differences play a vital role in any government, making the policies at the domestic level to facilitate the public through provide them the services from government, attaining the national interests, molding the policies as well as have strong effects on foreign policy of the state.

### **The ideology of American Politics**

In the international scenario, America is considered as a liberal state with having a liberal ideology, democracy, maintaining world peace and champion of human rights. It is also considered that America has not any ideological differences in the context of domestic and foreign policies. To some extent, it is true, because the objectives of US internal and external policies do not change with the change of US government. But it cannot be considered that both political parties follow the same ideology, approach, and action to attain the internal and external objectives of US.

In general term liberal paradigm is more dominant in US political ideology. But on the other hand conservative ideology also has a great contribution to draw a line which divides American public and politicians into two different ideological groups. These groups generally called Democrats Republicans, Liberal vs. Conservatives or Red vs. Blue. So there is a question that how these ideologies divide America? What are the major reasons behind the political polarization in America and its public?

Liberals recognize the deficiencies in society and seek change in the system by several important means. But conservatives oppose change and much supportive the traditional values and policies for running the system. They are satisfied with the status quo and support very slow and superficial alternation of the system. Liberals believe the human beings are trustworthy creatures that will normally behave themselves when left alone, on the opposite side conservative see individuals as relatively base and even somewhat ominous. Conservatives suspect the interests of others and believe that, unless somehow frightened, individuals will take advantage of their credulous or weaker fellows. Both groups also differ on the issue of human reason. Liberals support that human reason is powerful, that it can be effectively used to solve the problems of society and that it can be hired by individuals to overcome impulses to do impairment. Conservatives are apprehensive about the improving society prospects through cautious political policy is that they do not trust human reason is

powerful enough to even entirely understand, let alone solve, society's problems (Baradat, 2006, p. 22).

Hence conservatives believe on authoritarian controls over individuals in society, liberals tend to favor that little control by the government is normally necessary to ensure human compatibility. Both sides also differ on the concept of a social problem such as poverty. Liberals might try to solve the poverty by introducing a government program to eliminate it. Conservative, on the other hand, reacts opposite and recommends that the issues left to the market to decide. Individuals are direct control of the market and it works in response to the demand and supply of individuals. So conservatives favour to leave the solution to major problems to phenomena unrestrained by deliberate rational actions (Baradat, 2006, p. 23).

### **Emergence of Political Polarization in America**

The political polarization on the ideological bases in the US is not new, but it had emerged since the very first day of its independence. After the independence of America to secure the US territory from external threat, making the constitution and establishing economic system were the main objectives of US, but there was a big question that how to achieve these objectives? On these issues, federalists and anti-federalists had differed.

Alexander Hamilton from the Federalist Party (Treasury under the George Washington Presidency) was supporting the strong national government which protects the state from external threats. On the opposite side, Thomas Jefferson (the Secretary of State) from anti-federalist party believed that strong government is dangerous for citizens' liberties and itself become a threat to freedom of the state (Beard, 2012, p. 111).

On the economic development issue, Hamilton supported the strong central government model of British, prompting industry and commerce and rule by the best men. He influenced congress, "to use the national government's new powers to levy a tariff on imports. This revenue stream was used to found the national debt, which had been assumed from the individual status by the federal government and refinanced with fresh loans from abroad. This measure combined with the controversial establishment of a national bank, served to increase the liquidity of the US economy and restore the credibility of American credit, but also made the continuity of revenue from imports essential to the nation's economic health" (Quinn, 2010, p. 42).

Jefferson was not agreed with Hamilton ideas which were based on authority and mercantilism. He supported the agriculture and small business class of South US and suggested that public opinion's decided savor for commerce. He believed that if the European model of commerce and strong central government took hold in America as Hamilton suggested then the US would not survive (Hunt, 2007, p. 41).

Even, at the time of French Revolution in 1793 both leader support opposite camps. Jefferson supported France and its democratic change but on the other hand, Hamilton favoured the authoritarian side of England. Thus these political divisions became much stronger over time and now in present, these differences called the liberal and conservative ideological differences in Democrat and Republican Party. Mostly Republican are more associated with conservative ideology and Democrats are attached the liberal side.

### **Ideological Variation in American Politics and its Effect on Domestic Level**

Political parties have a great influence on domestic policies as well as foreign policies of the state. In America, the domestic structure also has divided into two basic parts. It can be seen during the time of Presidential election. On November 2000 America was divided politically by region and regional culture into “Blue States” and “Red States”. In that election, the Blue States was those that voted for the Democrat, Al Gore, and the Red States for Republican, George W. Bush. It was not only the political division between voters and parties but it was also a division between less violent and more violent cultures within America. When we comparatively analyze the Blue States with the Red, we find that the Democratic majority states had significantly lesser rates of suicide and homicide (both legal and illegal) than the Republican dominated states, both in 2000 and 2004 (Gilligan, 2011, p. 123).

In the twentieth century, there were three epidemics of lethal violence, all of which ended under Democrats and all of which began under Republicans, see the graph in figure 1.

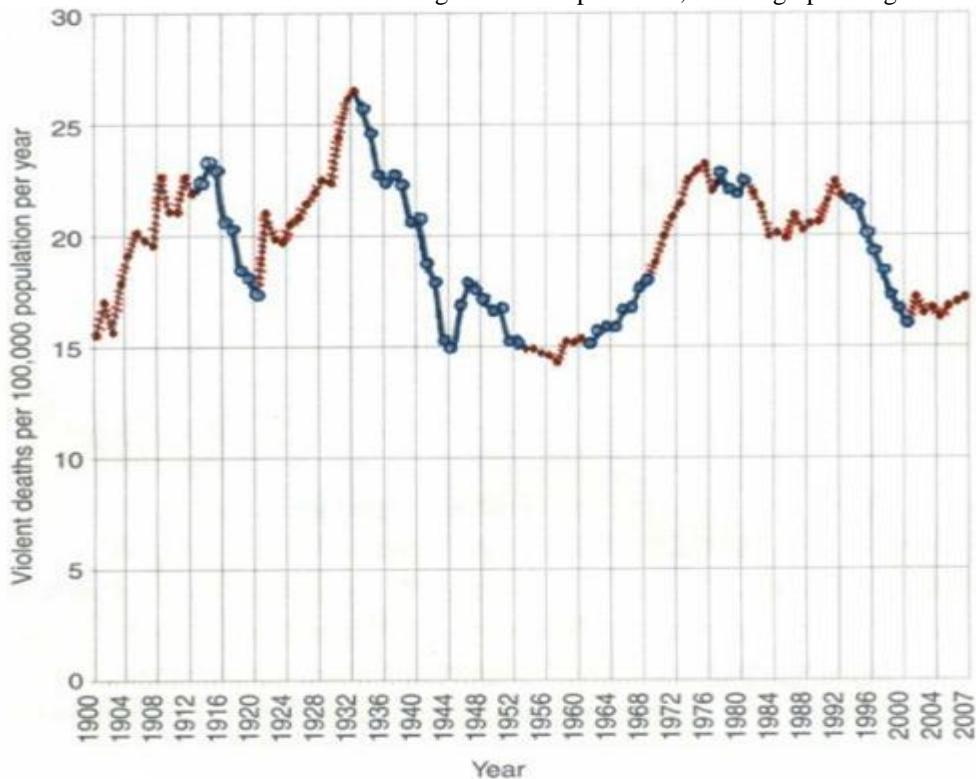


Figure 1 Violent Death Rates (Suicide plus Homicide) per 100,000 per Year, United States 1900-2007 Age-Adjusted to Standard Year 1940 (Not Based on all 48 States until 1933)

**Source:** Larry Bartels, (January 30, 2012), “Politics is a Matter of Life and Death”, at <http://themonkeycage.org/2012/01/politics-is-a-matter-of-life-and-death-times-23000/>

The graph clearly shows the Republican and Democratic difference on the domestic level in with it represents the violent death rates, homicide and suicide in America under the different eras of political parties. The death rates were high during the Republican regime and low under the Democrats government, for example, in early years of the twentieth century 1900 to 1912, the presidents of America were Republican: McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, and Taft and the graph of death rates and violence claimed continuously from 15.6 to 21.9. The Democrat president Woodrow Wilson came into power in 1913. The level of death rate and violence decreased of 17.4 during his eight-year in White House. During the next twelve years of Republican Party beginning in 1921, the death rate was increasing year to year which in fact the highest of the twentieth century, made a new record with a high epidemic level of 26.5 by 1932. This was then declined under Franklin D. Roosevelt to 15 by 1944 showed an ephemeral uptick after the World War II, as usually happens when both wars end and then resumed its decline back to its 1944 level of 15 by 1951 and 1952 during the last two years of Truman in White House. The rate of violent death remained below epidemic levels not only the Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration but also during the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. However in 1969 when Johnson was replaced by Nixon (Republican President), the rate quickly jumped against into the epidemic stratosphere for the third time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1970 it reached 19.9 and continued increasing to 23.2 by 1975. During the four years of center 1977-1980 it remained in the epidemic range of 21.9 – 22.9, and under the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush (both were Republicans) from 1981 to 1992, the rate sustained at epidemic levels of 19.9 – 22.4.

In 1993 when Clinton took office the violent death rate was 21.7, but after the replacement of Republican into Democrats the rate went to decline years after year, 18.3 in 1997 and during the end of his second term in 2000 it had fallen to 16. In 2001 George W. Bush succeeded, and the dramatic decline in the rate of lethal violence that had occurred under Clinton Presidency rapidly stopped and reversed itself as the death rate began migratory upward again. In 2007 (the last year for which there are comparable data) it had reached 17.2. So the direction of change under both parties (Republican & Democrats) is opposite. The net slaughters are only decreases under Democrats and only increases under Republicans.

### **Reasons behind the Violence**

By comparing the political performance of Democratic and Republican parties over the past century, we see a division at least as greater as that with respect to their effects on lethal violence rates. There are two main reasons behind the lethal violence. First is the unemployment and the other one is inequality, and both are interrelated with each other. According to James Galbraith, “when unemployment is high, inequality rises and when unemployment is low, inequality tends to fall” (Galbraith, 1998, p. 148). He also shows mathematically that,

“Movement of unemployment alone account for 79 percent of all variation in wage in inequality .... Other forces are to be reckoned with... but changes in unemployment are overwhelming the main thing ... Nothing else in our history has a comparable effect ... For those who are concerned with inequality, it should be an article of policy that unemployment be kept below the value at which it begins to lead to increased inequality” (Galbraith, 1998, p. 147-9).

Thus the rates of unemployment are not an only socio-economic variable that predicts changes in homicide and suicide rates. For exploring the relationship between violent crime and income inequality, Hsieh and Pugh performed a meta-analysis of thirty four studies and found that both poverty (absolute) and income inequality (relative poverty) are significantly correlated with homicide, not only in the America but throughout the world (Hsieh and Pugh, 1993, pp. 182-202; Kawachi, ed., 1999, pp. 278-296). When we calculate the rates of unemployment and economic inequality, then we see that violence, death rates, and unemployment duration have increased during the time of every Republican administration and decreased under every Democratic administration. From 1900 to 2008, the net sum of total increases that occurred under the regime of all Republicans, is 27.3 percent in the unemployment rate, on the other side the Democrats an almost exactly equal decrease of 26.5 percent. Hence the difference of net cumulative between the effects both parties (Republican & Democrat) had on the unemployment rate during that entire era was 53.8 percent, see table 2.

**Table 2: Rates of unemployment under Democratic vs. Republican Presidents, United States, 1990-2008**

Party	President	Years	Unemployment rate, beginning of term	Unemployment rate, end of term	Increase / decrease
Republican	McKinley, T. Roosevelt, Taft	1900-12	5.0	5.9	+0.9
Democratic	Wilson	1913-20	5.9	5.2	-0.7
Republican	Harding, Coolidge, Hoover	1921-32	5.2	22.9	+17.7
Democratic	F.D. Roosevelt, Truman	1933-52	22.9	3.0	-19.9
Republican	Eisenhower	1953-60	3.0	5.5	+2.5
Democratic	J. F. Kennedy, L. B. Johnson	1961-8	5.6	3.6	-1.9
Republican	Nixon, Ford	1969-76	3.6	7.7	+4.1
Democratic	Carter	1977-80	7.7	7.2	-0.5
Republican	Reagan, Bush	1981-92	7.2	7.5	+0.3
Democratic	Clinton	1993-2000	7.5	4.0	-3.5
Republican	Bush Jr.	2001-08	4.0	5.8	+1.8

Net change: Republican: +27.3%; Democrats: - 26.5%

Net cumulative difference between the two parties: 53.8%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor

Thus it is a big question why have declines in growth of economy and unemployment been so much greater when there was a Democratic president rather than a Republican in the White House? As a general rule, it can be assumed that liberal spend greater on domestic programs than conservatives.

High rates of unemployment, inequality and death during the time of Republican government, due to its conservative economic policies, which usually increase taxes on middle especially on the poor class while reducing government services to them through cuts

in social programs such as job training programs, government aid to education, social security, and so on. Conservatives believe that ours in an advanced economy, one that needs a greater degree of capital investment. Therefore the health of the economy is dependent on a sound capital base. So government interference in the economy should be kept to a minimum. The government should act to protect capital, the life's blood of the economy, see figure 3.

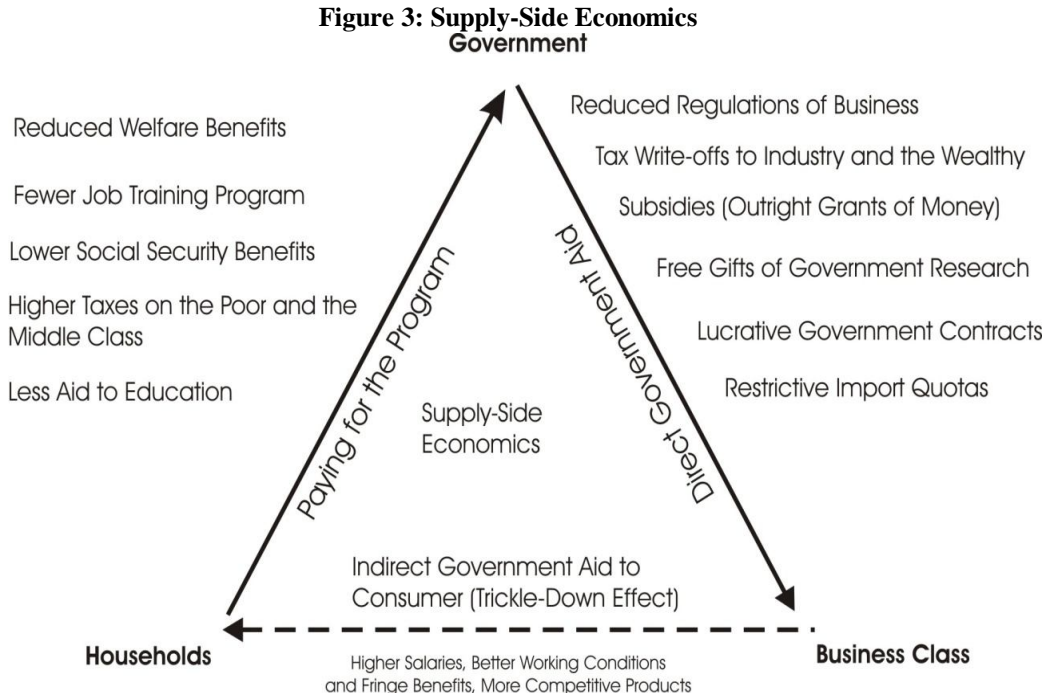


Figure 3 shows us the supply side approach which is mostly adopted by the Republican Party at domestic level. But Democrats (liberals) adopt the opposite policies, described as the demand side. The structure of demand-side increases government regulation and taxation of big business see figure 4.

**Figure 4: Demand Side Economics**





divided along ideological lines. Liberal and conservative ideologies have significant importance to format the policies at domestic as well as at foreign policy level. At the domestic level, Republican adopt the hostile and authoritarian jester towards individual rights, economic development, welfare services, and job opportunities, which become a major cause to increase the ratio of violence, suicide, inequality, and unemployment. Democrats follow the opposite way to facilitate the people through providing job opportunities, economic equality, individual freedom, and develop the more liberal values than conservatives, which resulted to decrease the level of violent death rates, unemployment, and inequality. It can be seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries under the different Republican and Democrats presidential eras. So in 2016, the year of presidential election in US both party presidents followed the same ideologies as their predecessors had been followed. This time Donald Trump from Republican Party and Hillary Clinton from Democratic Party. Both leaders introduced different policies from one and other, in their election campaign. For example, Hillary gave the importance to the domestic issues and supports the welfare services through continuing and expand “ObamaCare” policies which are related to the healthcare (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, PPACA, more popularly known as ObamaCare). On the economic issues, she also favoured the higher taxes on the wealthy, stricter limits on political campaign funds, stimulus better than market-led recovery and prioritizes green energy, but Republican Trump strongly opposed these issues. Even Democrats do not support the expansion of the military budget, where Republican strongly favour it. So the polarization between the parties and their policies has strong effects on domestic issues. Americans also divided into two ideological blocks and support the particular part of politics in which they get benefits, but mostly who are not in a condition to afford high taxes and a huge amount of healthcare, become victim and violent rate increase as we can see in the past and in present under every Republican regime than Democrats. Thus the ideological difference (Liberal vs. Conservative, Democrats vs. Republican, Right wing vs. Left wing, or Red vs. Blue) is a matter of ‘life and death’.

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