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BETWEEN MEMORY AND MODERNITY: THE PERSISTENCE OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

David Lalrinchhana
Research Scholar, Mizoram University

INTRODUCTION

Political ideologies are not spontaneous inventions; they emerge from centuries of intellectual debates, revolutions, and lived struggles. From Enlightenment philosophy to Marxist critiques of capitalism, ideologies have served as both the engines of social transformation and, at times, instruments of oppression. In India, and specifically in Mizoram, global ideological currents have consistently intersected with local traditions and political movements. To understand contemporary politics, one must critically trace the genealogy of past ideologies and their continuing influence on social institutions, leadership, and youth consciousness.

From Kant to Marx

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Karl Marx (1818–1883) represent two distinct yet intersecting trajectories of modern thought. Kant emphasized the primacy of reason and the universality of moral law, grounding human dignity in rational autonomy (Kant). Marx, conversely, located human emancipation in the transformation of material conditions and the abolition of class exploitation (Marx and Engels). While their approaches diverged, the dialogue between their ideas illustrates how moral philosophy and materialist critique converge in the pursuit of justice. Just as Mahatma Gandhi drew ethical lessons from Christianity without conversion, Marx engaged with Kant while advancing a revolutionary framework.

From Chiefs to Capitalists

Before the colonial encounter, Mizo society was structured under the authority of chiefs (Lal) and commoners (Hnamchawm). This hierarchical system, though embedded in custom, reflects broader patterns of power concentration observable in global history. With the rise of capitalism, Marx argued, chiefs and kings were replaced by bourgeois industrialists, who perpetuated exploitation in new forms (Marx and Engels). The resonance of Marx's critique can be seen in global revolutionary leaders—Lenin in Russia, Mao in China, and Fidel Castro in Cuba—who adapted his analysis to local struggles. Their legacies illustrate how structural inequalities reappear in varied historical contexts, whether through feudal chiefs or capitalist elites.

Old Ideas in New Movements

Classical Marxism focused primarily on class struggle. Yet its intellectual afterlife can be traced in contemporary movements such as environmental justice, gender equality, democratic socialism, and progressive politics (Eagleton). In India, the symbolic power of figures like Che Guevara and Marx continues to inspire youth activism, often merging with religious and nationalist discourses. Christianity in Mizoram, for example, has increasingly been interpreted through a social justice lens, echoing liberation theology. Similarly, nationalism, once a force of anti-colonial unity, now oscillates between inclusive pride and exclusionary politics (Anderson). Liberalism, too, has transformed—its original call for limited government is today supplemented by welfare policies aimed at social equity (Rawls). These evolutions show that ideologies mutate, yet retain traces of their historical DNA.

The Power of One

History demonstrates that transformative movements often begin with individuals who dare to imagine differently. Mussolini influenced Hitler, Gandhi absorbed Tolstoy's nonviolence, and Marx gave language to proletarian struggles. Martin Luther King Jr. mobilized civil rights through moral conviction. Similarly, in Mizoram, youth leaders, administrators, and church-based thinkers have redirected collective energies toward peace and reconciliation, especially in the aftermath of insurgency (Nunthara). Ideologies gain permanence not merely through texts but through human agency, shaped by leaders who embody and reinterpret their principles.

The Importance of Learning from History

The collapse of empires and the persistence of injustice remind us that neglecting history is perilous. Nations fall when the lessons of liberty and equality are forgotten, while authoritarianism thrives on historical amnesia (Arendt). Ideologies that once promised liberation, such as communism in the USSR, often ended in authoritarianism, whereas seemingly minor protests, like India's Salt March, evolved

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into transformative movements. For Mizoram, the 1986 Peace Accord remains a powerful lesson: dialogue and negotiation, not armed struggle, ensure sustainable peace (Lalrimawia). Yet, in a digital age, ideologies risk being reduced to aesthetic symbols—Che Guevara T-shirts or fashionable atheism—detached from historical depth. The task is to ask whether an ideology uplifts or divides, builds or destroys.

Guiding the Youth: Passion with Purpose

The role of youth in shaping political futures cannot be overstated. However, passion without intellectual grounding risks falling into fanaticism or superficial activism. Technology accelerates expression but often discourages critical reflection. Before mobilization, young citizens must study the genealogy of ideas; before idolizing, they must discern values. In Mizoram, as elsewhere, democratic resilience depends on informed participation. Elders must guide with humility, while youth must question with responsibility. Only through such dialogue can political ideals translate into enduring democratic culture.

CONCLUSION

Modern politics is the sedimentation of centuries of ideological debates. Our democratic choices and moral responsibilities are shaped by past intellectual struggles. To ignore history is to risk repeating its tragedies. The challenge is not merely to inherit ideologies but to critically adapt them to contemporary needs. For Mizoram and India alike, the balance between tradition and change, passion and patience, individuality and community will define the trajectory of democracy. The past is not a chain but a compass; it should guide us not backward, but forward—with heart, mind, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

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