

IDEAL STATE AND POLITICS: PATHWAYS FOR NATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The essence of an ideal state has fascinated scholars and thinkers from diverse fields, leading some to explore how different political arrangements can enhance a country's output and development. While the world is becoming more intricate and globalized, going back to what an ideal state is, means there can be a better discussion on what systems of governance can deal with the existent problems.

The ideal state is one of the core concepts of political philosophy. This is not just an idea for thought exercises, but a vision of what can be used in policy making on how to achieve national development and sustainable development at the same time. The ideal state should advance social justice, equity, and good governance which are basic requirements to any nation that cares for its people and nature.

In the cause of the research, one of the ways of achieving an ideal state is to practice integrative governance. The modern notion of democracy advocates for the involvement of people in the making of policies. In an

ideal state, people should not simply wait for policies to be made; they should be part of the conversations regarding national goals and forms of sustainability.

Again, the research focuses on environmental stewardship as a crucial element of the ideal state. Thinkers like John Stuart Mill and modern philosophers emphasize the moral responsibility to use natural resources sustainablyⁱ. A truly ideal state should weave environmental policy into its economic framework, understanding that the long-term well-being of society is deeply connected to the planet's health. Supporting renewable energy initiatives, fostering circular economies, and enforcing strong environmental regulations are not just ethical duties; they are also effective approaches to achieving sustainable development.

Moreover, using analytical method of research, the core of an ideal state, as it promotes a civic culture that prioritizes education, critical thinking, and innovation are critically discussed. John Dewey argued that democracy relies on an informed populace that can thoughtfully engage with societal challengesⁱⁱ. In our rapidly evolving world, characterized by technological progress and globalization, it is vital to invest in educational systems that emphasize critical thinking and adaptability. Such investments will equip future generations to tackle complex issues and make meaningful contributions to national growth.

Clarification of Terms

What Is Political Philosophy?

According to Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Political philosophy is defined as philosophical reflection on how best to arrange our collective life, our political institutions and our social practices, such as our economic system and our pattern of family life”ⁱⁱⁱ.

What Is Politics?

Politics encompasses activities related to governance, the distribution of power, and the promotion of societal values and interests. In simple terms, Politics is the way in which groups of people come together to make decisions as a collective^{iv}. At its core, politics involves negotiation and conflict resolution among individuals and groups with differing beliefs and priorities. Aristotle further supports this by saying that Man is by nature a political animal^v. This process takes place in various environments, such as government institutions, political parties, and social movements, showcasing the complexity of human interactions and the organization of societies. In democracies, for instance, politics is characterized by free elections, civil liberties, and an emphasis on public participation.

What Is Ideal State?

The concept of the Ideal State in philosophy refers to a theoretical model representing the most perfect form of societal organization^{vi}. This idea has been examined by numerous philosophers over time, each offering their unique interpretation of what an ideal society entails.

One of the earliest and most significant discussions of the Ideal State appears in Plato's "The Republic." In this work, Plato describes his vision of a just society led by philosopher-kings, individuals endowed with both wisdom and virtue. He posits that the Ideal State is characterized by justice, where each societal class comprising of rulers, warriors, and producers operates in harmony according to its natural role^{vii}.

Theoretical Foundations of the Ideal State and Politics

Political philosophy has long grappled with the nature of the ideal state. Plato, in his work "The Republic", presents a vision of an ideal state governed by philosopher-kings, who possess wisdom and virtue necessary for just governance^{viii}. This foundational idea underscores the importance of governance grounded in ethical principles. Likewise, John Rawls, through his concept of the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance," offers a framework for ensuring justice as fairness, laying the groundwork for sustainable political institutions^{ix}. Such frameworks promote accountability, equality, and collective welfare, which are vital for sustainable national development.

When discussing the theoretical foundations of the ideal state and politics, philosophers have long debated the nature of governance and the principles that should guide a just society. According to Plato, in his work "The Republic," the ideal state is one where philosopher-kings rule with wisdom and virtue, ensuring the well-being of all citizens. Plato's concept of the ideal state is based on

the idea of justice and the division of labor, where each individual contributes to the common good^x.

Conversely, Aristotle critiques Plato's framework and presents his own views in "Politics." He underscores the necessity of practical governance and the pivotal role of the middle class in fostering stability and virtue within the state^{xi}. For Aristotle, the Ideal State is one that harmonizes the interests of its citizens while advancing the common good^{xii}. Contemporary interpretations of the Ideal State have also emerged, particularly with the rise of social contract theories. Thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke argue that an ideal society is formed through the agreement of individuals to establish a government that safeguards their rights and promotes collective welfare. Hobbes, in "Leviathan," advocates for a strong central authority to avert chaos^{xiii}, while Locke highlights the importance of individual rights and limited government as fundamental to an ideal societal framework^{xiv}. Political systems vary widely across cultures and regions, ranging from democratic to authoritarian regimes. In democracies, for instance, politics is characterized by free elections, civil liberties, and an emphasis on public participation. Conversely, authoritarian systems often suppress dissent and limit political freedoms. Despite these differences, the fundamental goal of politics remains the same: to allocate resources, create laws, and maintain order within a society. Furthermore, politics is closely tied to power dynamics, exploring how power is acquired, exercised, and contested in various contexts, including class, race, gender, and ideology. Political theorists and scholars engage in discussions about the nature of power,

examining concepts such as authority, legitimacy, and sovereignty. Understanding these elements is crucial for grasping the complexities of political behavior and the impact of policies on everyday life.

In modern times, philosophers like John Rawls have further developed the theoretical foundations of the ideal state and politics. Rawls, in his work *A Theory of Justice*, asserts

For a society based on the principles of fairness and equality, he further maintained that the ideal state is one where social and economic inequalities are minimized, and all individuals have equal opportunities to succeed^{xv}.

Challenges of Achieving the Ideal State in Politicking

Throughout history, philosophers have pondered the challenges of achieving the perfect political system. From Plato's *"Republic"* to Machiavelli's *"The Prince"*, these thinkers have grappled with the complexities inherent in the pursuit of the ideal state in politicking. This is an attempt to explore the obstacles and dilemmas faced in this pursuit, tapping insights from prominent philosophers.

Plato, in his work *"The Republic"*, proposed the idea of an utopian society governed by philosopher-kings. According to Plato, these rulers would be guided by reason and virtue, ensuring that the state operated in the best interests of its citizens^{xvi}. While this concept may seem appealing in theory, the practical challenges of implementing such a system are immense. As Aristotle

pointed out in his critique of Plato's ideal state, human nature is inherently flawed, making it difficult to find leaders who possess the wisdom and virtue necessary to govern effectively.

Rousseau, in his work "The Social Contract," also grappled with the challenges of achieving the ideal state. He argued that true democracy could only be achieved through the collective will of the people, with each individual surrendering their own interests for the greater good of society^{xvii}. However, as modern political systems have shown, achieving consensus among diverse populations is no easy task. The competing interests and ideologies of different groups often lead to gridlock and division, making it difficult to implement the kind of radical reforms that Rousseau envisioned.

Interchangeably, Plato envisioned the existence of the philosopher-king, a wise ruler guided by reason. In contrast, Machiavelli emphasized the necessity of cunning and pragmatism in navigating the brutal realities of power politics. The tension between idealism and realism highlights the challenges political leaders face in governance.

Achieving a Bridge between Philosophy and Practice

The relationship between philosophy and practical politics has always been a rich area for discussion. Thinkers like Plato have suggested that the best government is one led by philosopher-king, people who embody both wisdom and virtue. In "The Republic," Plato claims that only those who grasp the form of the good can establish a just society^{xviii}. This idea implies

that philosophical insights should directly shape political actions. Likewise, John Stuart Mill emphasized the role of utilitarianism as a key principle for political decisions. He argued that policies should strive to maximize happiness for the largest number of people, thus connecting philosophical ethics with real-world governance^{xix}. Mill's support for individual freedoms and social reform highlights the necessity of a political system rooted in ethical values. Additionally, Hannah Arendt's examination of the public sphere underscores the importance of action and dialogue in political life. She argues that a vibrant political community requires citizens to engage in meaningful conversations, allowing philosophical concepts to translate into collective action^{xx}. This dynamic between thought and practice is crucial for achieving an ideal political state. In summary, the pursuit of an ideal political environment demands a strong dialogue between philosophical ideas and practical execution. By leveraging the insights of philosophers like Plato, Mill, and Arendt, we can foster a political landscape that not only aims for idealism but also effectively navigates the complexities of human experience.

In a way to offer a philosophical analysis geared towards a bridge between the ideal state and practical governance, a renewed focus on participatory democracy is essential. Engaging citizens in policy-making processes can empower communities and improve collective decision-making. Deliberative democracy, as proposed by philosophers like Jürgen Habermas, emphasizes communication and rational discourse as foundations for democratic legitimacy^{xxi}. Implementing

such frameworks can cultivate an informed citizenry dedicated to sustainable development goals.

Education is another critical pathway. John Stuart Mill argued that a well-informed populace is central to a functioning democracy, advocating for educational systems that develop critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills^{xxii}. By prioritizing education, societies can cultivate individuals equipped to engage with political processes and advocate for sustainable development.

Achieving the ideal state in politics is a daunting task, requiring a balance between lofty ideals and harsh realities. By learning from philosophers like Plato and Machiavelli, we can gain valuable insights into the complexities of political leadership in the modern world.

Recommendations for Sustainable Development

- 1. Strengthening Institutions:** Political philosophers highlight that robust institutions are essential for the transition towards sustainable governance. Establishing transparency and accountability measures can mitigate the risks of corruption and enhance public trust.
- 2. Promoting Environmental Ethics:** As discussed by philosophers like Aldo Leopold, an ethical relationship with the environment is fundamental to sustainability^{xxiii}. Policies should promote ecological awareness to ensure that economic development does not come at the expense of environmental degradation.

3. **Fostering Global Cooperation:** The interconnectedness of global challenges necessitates cooperative approaches among nations. Political theorists, including Immanuel Kant, have advocated for cosmopolitanism and international cooperation as pathways to lasting peace and development^{xxiv}.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Despite the philosophical ideals, several challenges hinder the practical realization of the ideal state. One pressing issue is the increasing prevalence of corruption and inefficiency within political systems, as articulated by Machiavelli, who asserts that power often corrupts, leading rulers to prioritize self-interest over the common good^{xxv}. The dichotomy between the ideal and the real poses significant obstacles to genuine progress toward sustainable development.

Metaphorically, Nigerian citizens, for years were pored over about the chronicle of Nigeria, a nation fractured by warring factions, its once-fertile lands now scarred by drought and conflict. The task was to forge a path towards the “Ideal State,” a concept whispered about in hushed tones, a legendary utopia of prosperity and peace. The analysis began with finding the root of Nigeria’s decay, especially on decades of self-serving oligarchs, prioritizing personal gain over collective welfare, had crippled the nation’s infrastructure and drained its resources. From this whole problem concluded, the central problem was a systemic failure of governance, breeding inequality and hindering sustainable

development. The solution is tied on a gradual, transformative process. This research proposed a pronged approach fostering inclusive governance, investing in sustainable agriculture to create workforce, and promoting equitable education. The actualization creates a surge of determination. The path to the "Ideal State" wasn't a straight line, but a winding, uphill climb. Instead, it is armed with proactive analysis filled with the possibility of a flourishing nation, free from conflict and poverty, fueled by unwavering spirit.

Furthermore, the rise of populist politics has blurred the lines between rhetoric and reality, diverting attention from pragmatic policies required for national advancement. As Hannah Arendt points out in her writings, the vacillation of political discourse leads to the erosion of democratic values and civic responsibility, creating disenchantment among the citizenry^{xxvi}. This disillusionment can hinder collective efforts aimed at sustainable development, urging philosophers and policymakers alike to seek solutions that reignite civic engagement.

The ideal state, as envisioned by political philosophers, serves as a guiding light in our quest for national and sustainable development, especially in Nigeria. While challenges persist, a concerted effort to merge philosophical insights with practical strategies can pave the way for a future where politics and ethics coalesce, ensuring a more sustainable and just world for generations to come.

The concept of the ideal state has been a central theme in political philosophy for centuries. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau have all grappled with the question of what constitutes the perfect political system. However, despite the efforts of these great thinkers, achieving the ideal state remains a significant challenge in modern political structures. In conclusion, while the ideal state remains a compelling concept in political philosophy, the challenges of achieving it in practice are significant. History upholds that human nature, competing interests and the complexities of modern society all present obstacles to the realization of the perfect political system. Despite these challenges, however, the pursuit of the ideal state remains a worthy goal, as it forces us to confront the shortcomings of our current political structures and strive for a better future.

ENDNOTES

ⁱMill, John Stuart. Utilitarianism. 1861

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ⁱⁱⁱ Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. What is political philosophy. Retrieved from <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/overview/political-philosophy> on 02.12.2024.

^{iv} Aristotle. "Politics." Translated by Carnes Lord. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2013.

^vIbid 6

^{vi}Plato. The Republic. Translated by Allan Bloom. (New York: Basic Books), 1991.

vii Ibid 120

viii Ibid

ix Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1971.

^xPlato. The Republic. Translated by Allan Bloom. (New York: Basic Books), 1991.

^{xi} Aristotle. "Politics." Translated by Carnes Lord. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2013.

^{xii} Ibid 27

^{xiii} Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Edited by Edwin Curley. Indianapolis, (IN: Hackett Publishing), 1994.

^{xiv} Locke, John. Two Treaties of Government. Edited by Peter Laslett. (Cambridge: University Press), 1988.

^{xv} Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1971.

^{xvi} Plato. The Republic. Translated by Allan Bloom. (New York: Basic Books), 1991.

^{xvii} Roussau, Jean-Jacques. The Social Contract. Translated by Maurice Cranston. New York: Penguin Books, 1968.

^{xviii} Plato. The Republic. Translated by Allan Bloom. (New York: Basic Books), 1991.

^{xix} Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. 1861.

^{xx} Arendt, Hannah. The Human Condition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1958.

^{xxi} Habermas, Jürgen. Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. (Cambridge: MIT Press), 1996.

^{xxii} Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. 1861.

^{xxiii} Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1949.

^{xxiv} Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. 1795.

^{xxv} Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1998.

^{xxvi} Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1958.