Political leadership, moral hazards, and public expectations

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Abstract Our paper is devoted to the concept of political leadership. Leaders in politics are ubiquitous and their role is essential, since they often represent individuals capable of drawing the masses or inducing massive changes in the society. In the same time, political leaders have to obey the laws and norms, since quite often charismatic leaders who ignited plausible changes, become no longer needed and need to step down.

The paper also discusses the concept of a political culture and the role of leadership in shaping up this culture. In addition, it tackles the issues of moral hazard and public expectations that are entwined with the theory of political leadership.

We conclude that political leaders should be responsible for the maintaining the healthy social and political environment and preserving the rule of law. Moreover, it becomes clear that a key feature of successful 21st century political leaders is the ability to act at multiple levels of leadership and to emanate authority and respect at various local and international levels.

1 Introduction

Political leadership is a complex issue that involves principles of morality, trust, rule of law, and equality before the law (Ikenberry 1996). Whenever a new democratic state is being founded, there is a need to have political leaders with strong democratic reputation. Only they would be capable of taking their nations through chaos of the first months and years of the new state’s existence. It also important to realise that the creation of new states goes hand in hand with increased expectations from the members of world community (Mawdsley 2002).

Very often, political leaders emerge when there are territorial changes occurring in the world. However, it is easy to see that new territorial entities might create distortion to the established world order. Hence, world powers need to be sure that they would remain democratic and co-operative. Therefore, strong democratic leaders are always in need but are often not easy to locate (Dahl 1994). Continuity is the problem here – human lives have a short span and democratic leaders do not leave their offspring to take over their seats, just like monarchs or dictators do. Thence, it often happens that a good democratic leader might be succeeded by a dictator of the worst calibre as a result of purely democratic elections (Urbinati 2005).

There is also an issue of control from the central government. In some African countries, for example, the power is concentrated in the large urban centres and the quality of public services and administration is poor in the rural regions and across the country (Myerson 2011).

Political leaders need to keep their hands on the pulse, so to speak. Reaching out of the bubble of political life to reach a wider range of social forces, movements and cultural dynamics, and active work to create a wider audience for political discourse, are important tasks. The adoption of multinational forms of governance and action outside the nation state, which allow a broad democratic governance of the market economy, especially of global finances, while acknowledging that political legitimacy and the identification of the population continue to be the primary concern of the national economy governments unsupported claims.

Importantly, as the party orientation weakens and political disillusionment becomes widespread, leaders become increasingly important: the decisions that voters make at the ballot box are increasingly being judged on the skills and character of the ballot box (Anderson et al. 2004). Individuals determine the judgments that citizens make over the course of time about democratic politics itself.

The steady dissolution of the social blocs which were linked to the major competing classes in modern industrial society, had a highly destabilizing impact on how citizens view politics and identify with their dominant institutions and actors, and weakened cultural foundations. Those forming these classes underpinned the mass party policy in the industrial age. Increasingly, these trends hamper the formulation of policies that address the political issues that are not easily integrated into the political cycle, but which represent some of the most pressing societal problems of democratic countries, such as: climate change, stabilization of public finances, and the need for care of an aging population (Hartley 2019).

In a comprehensive analysis based on the results of many questions, one can also find that criticizing political leaders is a major source of distrust of the government. Some polls revealed that criticizing political
leaders is as important an element in the mismatch equation as the view that the government is doing a poor job of running its programs (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016).

In addition, it appears that cynicism about political leaders and the political system is more important to distrust than concerns about the proper role of the government, concerns about its power and urgency, concerns about its priorities, or resentment against taxes. In a way, a trust to the state and its leaders can be pre-supposed by many concepts, including religion or paying taxes (Strielkowski and Cabelkova 2015; Moyseyenko and Ryvak 2016).

This paper focuses on the notions of political leadership from the point of view of the theories of international relations and political sciences. We contemplate the position and the role of the modern political leader and discuss her or his recent part in the modern world. Moreover, we tackle the issue of a moral hazard any political leader faces and the public expectations that are placed upon the leader’s shoulder. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the morality and political systems in developed countries. Section 3 focuses on the leadership and continuity of political goals. Section 4 induces the debate on the democratic leadership. Section 5 debates on the political leadership and its often by-product represented by the totalitarianism. Section 6 tackles about the democracy and its main threat today which is impersonated by the populism. Finally, Section 7 concludes with the generalisation of some outcomes, conclusions and discussions.

2 Morality and political systems in developed countries

Generally, morality and political systems might differ in seemingly similar countries. For example, in Latin America, colonial mining and plantation economies formed a powerful political elite that still exists in some countries and has little interest in creating economic opportunities for the majority of people (Coatsworth 2008).

The vast majority of the poor lack a mechanism to demand the kind of responsible government that involves the idea of a social contract between taxpayers and the state. A key reality for developing countries is the limited size of a middle class, which in advanced economies is the bulwark of democracy and central to the creation and maintenance of a social contract forged in the political arena (Jankelová et al. 2017).

Perhaps the best example of an organized political system of intolerance that both religious and secular societies faced was centrally planned socialism, but that should come as no surprise. It is consistent with a regime that believes that it can plan the economy as a whole, which means dictating the economic decisions of every citizen, leaving little room for religious freedom in society.

In the late twentieth century, the totalitarian rulers of Central and Eastern Europe hoped to create a society that would possess and control private property and suppress religious and political opinion as well as freedom of association (Coatsworth 2008). In contrast, the whole American culture is built upon the trust in God, however it does not really matter which “God” it is as soon as it is some kind of God (Marks et al. 2010).

The late Harvard philosopher John Rawls, perhaps the most influential analyst of international responsibility from a liberal perspective, explored the question of how sensible citizens and peoples can live together peacefully in a just world. The diversity of values and cultures among peoples is the result of a legitimate free exercise of human reason, and tolerance requires us to refrain at international level from an allegedly universal conception of human rights and liberal democracy (Mouffe 2005). In the context of guaranteed rights and freedoms, Rawls suggests allowing social and economic inequalities only to the extent that they are of the greatest benefit to the least disadvantaged (Pereira et al. 2017).

The representatives of the peoples come together in a context of reciprocity characterized by symmetry, freedom and equality of the parties. The component of current regional values, which is explained by the distant political history, correlates strongly with the current economic performance in the region. Under the identifying assumption, this is evidence of a causal effect of values on economic development. There are several possible sources of influence, such as the functioning of political institutions, including local governments, or the organization of production or the willingness of citizens to respect the law. With increasing strategic containment by hegemony, emerging market proactive leaders will seek allies, particularly political support and security cooperation from their surrounding countries, to stop the containment of hegemony. The strategy of closing alliances with neighbours runs the risk of a war against hegemony and is often taken over by political leaders who are able to take a strong political lead through proactive thinking.

3 Leadership and continuity of political goals

The functions of these organizations in the larger political system were to represent sectoral interests, to disseminate policy proposals and decisions, to mobilize the population and to help create a political consensus. State institutions such as the representative bodies of Poder Popular (the political force that represents the workers’ democracy coined in Chile), the executive, the public administration, the armed forces and the judiciary. Their
design and division of labour are closely linked to the structure of local and provincial administration and the economic planning and management system introduced in the mid-1970s (Gaudichaud 2009).

In the United States, the political leadership represents a well-studied phenomenon and is reflected well in the academic literature. After the War of Independence, the nation returned to peace-related activities such as agriculture, manufacturing, railway construction and all the advances triggered by the arrival of the second industrial revolution. However, the reorientation of politics in the decade before the Civil War and the political needs of reconstruction employed the parties and Congress with issues that had little to do with the day-to-day affairs of working people (Baker 1984).

Although there were some notable political figures at that time, a large majority of US national leadership could hardly be considered political mediocrity: the doers and shakers were all in business, though some used their financial power to buy high offices such as state governments and the Senate of the United States.

Throughout the 20th century, the traditional polarization of Cold War rivalries between US and the Soviet Union has been replaced by a polarization between the developed and underdeveloped world, between weak and strong states, and between the peoples in the centre and those who depend on them (Friedberg 1993).

Nowadays, in the system known as “New World Order”, almost all the peripheral societies of the world system at the beginning of the 21st century pursue the same goals as in previous decades: the defence of national sovereignty, the pursuit of full economic and social development, and the struggle for democracy and cultural identity (Demko 2018). These historical goals will not only be more difficult to achieve in an increasingly controversial world, but many of the partial gains of recent decades will disappear under the influence of the forces of economic, political and cultural trans-nationalisation.

After the outbreak of the events of September 11, the topic of democratization has returned to the top priorities of US policy, in which the diffusion and promotion of the values of democracy has become a key concept of US foreign policy. The then US government believed that the events of September 11th in New York and Washington D.C. in 2001 were the result of a lack of political and economic freedom in the Middle East. Therefore, it can be shown the US has incorporated the issue of the spread of democratic rules into its political agenda, as this is an approach that allows the US to fight terrorism and eliminate the sources of terrorism (Alessandri et al. 2015).

The intellectual origins of this teaching are attributed to Stephen Walt, the owner of the theory of geopolitical balance between Sunnis and Shiites. The theoretical framework of the study hinges on examining the concept of foreign policy change as a starting point to monitor and analyse the US foreign policy changes to the Gulf region following the September attacks and make this change with US policy under President compare Obama. Then the fundamental reasons that led to the change in US foreign policy can be determined by whether the change is due to internal or international factors.

Continuity in foreign policy implies continuation of the ruling elite in preserving the foreign policy pattern against the international environment, despite the fact whether the regime in question is democratic or undemocratic (Younis et al. 2008).

Nicholson (2002) combines the concept of pursuing foreign policy with the concept of political stability, explains why the regime can stay in power for a long time, and analyses the reasons that could ultimately lead to its overthrow. In addition, Nicholson (2002) argues that supporters of foreign policy change do not change foreign policy but contribute to the stability of a regime.

With the proliferation of actors and technologies, one can observe the increasing involvement of non-state actors in addition to the traditional foreign policy bureaucracies of the governments of the member states. In the past, many observers saw the logical conclusion of the United Nations efforts as a world government based on those of the existing states. Increasingly, however, the more chaotic term of global governance is the category under which many members of civil society seek to improve the international order.

The dramatic powerlessness and the divisions and weaknesses that characterize human rights organizations in the Philippines can also be used as an example. The local Liberal Party was decimated by clashes, and its leadership (and other members of the Aquino Coalition) struggled to develop an opposition and strategy. At the same time, others of his policies are an atrocity for the left: the human rights violations associated with the drug war, his powers and the armed forces, his threats to declare martial law, and his decision to break peace talks.

While political leaders and external experts have focused on the debate on the role of nuclear weapons, military planners have had to adjust the plans to meet the requirements of military effectiveness and operational reliability if deterrence fails. For example, in today's China, adopting the alliance strategy requires even more reason and political will from political leaders than would be the case in other countries, as the idea of forming alliances was demonized as a Cold War mentality.

Last but not least, one should mention the issue of political cybersecurity and micro-targeting that was made popular with regard to the recent scandal involving an English company called Cambridge Analytica. The company allegedly used algorithms trained on Facebook users' profiles and likes to influence the voters in various countries, including the US at the recent presidential elections. The use of digital technologies seems to put the question of who really the leader under question is. Is it a person or a digital technology, an algorithm that is capable to interfere with people's rational minds?
4 Democratic leadership

Democratic leadership in the 21st century is becoming a problem few countries can face. It is not easy to establish the rule of law without breaching the privacy of citizens either by violating their on-line privacy and security for the “great of good”.

In the United States, the Republican Party, after analysing its electoral manifestos, leans far to the right than most of the traditional conservative parties in Western Europe and Canada. In contrast, the Democratic Party is positioned closer to the liberal parties. The Democrats of the South favoured slavery in all areas, while their northern counterparts thought that every area should win a referendum. The split helped Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the newly formed Republican Party, to victory in the 1860 election, despite winning only 40 percent of the vote. With the victory of the Union in the Civil War, the Republicans had control over Congress, where they dominated for the remainder of the 19th century (Jahn 2011).

On the other hand, Democrats from the South separated from the Republican Party, starting with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the general shift of the party to the left. The examples of that are Thurmond of South Carolina, Billy Tauzin of Louisiana, Kent Hance and Ralph Hall of Texas, or Richard Shelby of Alabama (Jeong et al. 2011).

Until the 1980s, the Democratic Party in the United States had a conservative element, mainly from the South and the border regions. However, since the 1930s organized work has been a critical component of the democratic party coalition. The unions provide much of the money, the grassroots political organization and the voting base to support the party. Democrats are more likely to be represented by trade unions, although union membership has generally declined in recent decades. The anger over the political elites, economic dissatisfaction and concern about rapid social change have fuelled political upheavals in the world’s regions in recent years. As some surveys demonstrated, the ideas that make up the core of liberal democracy are still popular among the global public, but the commitment to democracy may still be weak (Foa and Mounk 2016).

5 Political leadership and totalitarianism

The worst considered form of political order is, of course, totalitarianism. It retains the full power of expropriation and imposition. The right to control everything and everyone. Maintaining the power, unless citizens are fully supported, requires the violent suppression of any dissimilar elements, unless the government deliberately permits or organizes them (Diamond 1989).

Under the totalitarianism system, governments fall into general categories of authoritarianism, oligarchy and democracy (Bogaards 2009). Authoritarian governments differ in who holds the power and in how much they take control of the governments they govern, but all are characterized by the fact that the authorized are not elected individuals.

It is important to summarize the main differences between totalitarianism and authoritarian governments. The government controls almost every aspect of the economy, politics, culture and society. Education, religion, art and science, even morality and reproductive rights are controlled by totalitarian governments. While all power in an authoritarian government is exercised by a single dictator or a single group, the people have only a limited degree of political freedom.

While totalitarian states tend to have a sophisticated guiding ideology, authoritarian states usually do not. Totalitarian states suppress traditional social organizations, while authoritarian states tolerate some social organizations based on traditional or special interests. Unlike totalitarian states, authoritarian states are incapable of mobilizing the entire population to pursue national goals, and all measures taken by the state are usually within relatively predictable limits (Zhang 1994).

Modern authoritarianism has succeeded in destroying former totalitarian systems through new strategies of oppression, the exploitation of open societies, and the spread of illegal policies in the democratic countries themselves. Many modern countries display modern authoritarian systems, especially in media control, propaganda, the suppression of civil society and the weakening of political pluralism. The recruitment of political advisors and lobbyists from democratic countries to represent the interests of autocracies is an increasing phenomenon. While democracy originated in ancient Greece, modern democracy has relatively recently become a generally recognized political ideal.

One would agree that totalitarianism is most closely linked to the Stalinist Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany. Its features include dictatorial power, mass mobilization, a leader's personality cult, a secret or paramilitary police state, and exceptionally high levels of political violence against internal enemies or unwanted groups. However, there are many countries nowadays that might fall into the same definition (e.g. North Korea just to give one example). Therefore, the concept is still vital and appealing to many leaders turned to be dictators who see it as a good model for preserving power and influence.
6 Democracy and populism

One more important issue in the discussion of political leadership and leaders is populism (Alvares and Dahlgren 2016). It represents a specific trend than can be found in modern democracy and which becomes a serious threat for its very existence. One can say that populism was created thanks to democracy, but it now represents an element that can hamper the democracy and undermine its basic values (Seghezza and Pittaluga 2018). The debate over the rise of populism has often focused on the economy, especially the effects of austerity on supporting traditional social democratic parties (Rodrik 2018). While there is no doubt, it is also important to understand that populists have carefully exploited the globalization issue beyond the economy. Populism has long been associated with immigration opponents and liberal social values such as gay marriage. Populists regard liberal democracy and its core values of the rule of law, representative democracy and the protection of minorities as the main cause of their undeniable threat: the perceived national deterioration.

Populism is seen as a kind of alternative to democracy because it is a threat (Bluhdorn and Butzlaff 2019). Populism can be discussed and perhaps explained in terms of democracy, both in the light of a threat and as an integral part of democracy. Moreover, it can be argued that both populism and democracy establish and sustain the same principle of popular power.

If citizens remain loyal to a political party, even if it violates important democratic norms, political polarization poses a real threat to democratic accountability. A key issue for democratization and democratization students is how to overcome such intense partisan polarization. Many students of advanced and developing democracies have highlighted institutional reforms (e.g. electoral reforms, reforms of the candidate selection system), but others have stressed the importance of deeper social, economic and even the need to rebuild democratic norms.

7 Conclusions and discussions

Overall, it is important to realise that political leadership is a versatile concept that is subjected to many influences and factors. There are many approaches and views on who are the political leaders and how they should interact with their followers and citizens. The views might differ from country to country and are subjected to religion, mentality, culture as well as other small and large differences.

Political leadership can represent the good and bad sides of the human nature and equally all shades of the political spectrum. However, they should always be consistent and ensure continuity and unbiasedness in their line of work. The trust put into the leaders by the people cannot be smashed to pieces.

Today, political leadership and leaders experience unprecedented changes related to the globalisation and digitalisation of the world economy. Long gone are the days when election paper posters and leaflets were printed in hundreds of thousands, or when radio broadcasts and television debates (such as the one which propelled J.F. Kennedy and made him the winner of the US presidential elections) were capable of tipping the scales. Today, we live in the era of Internet, social networks, and abundance of information. Big Data, fake news, micro-targeting – all of those became mundane in politics. Today’s voters and politicians need to be aware of these changes and adapt their behaviour and expectations accordingly.

Nevertheless, in spite of it all these changes presented above, one thing remains clear: political leaders regardless of their ideological background or political spectrum should attempt to live up to the public expectations.

References


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