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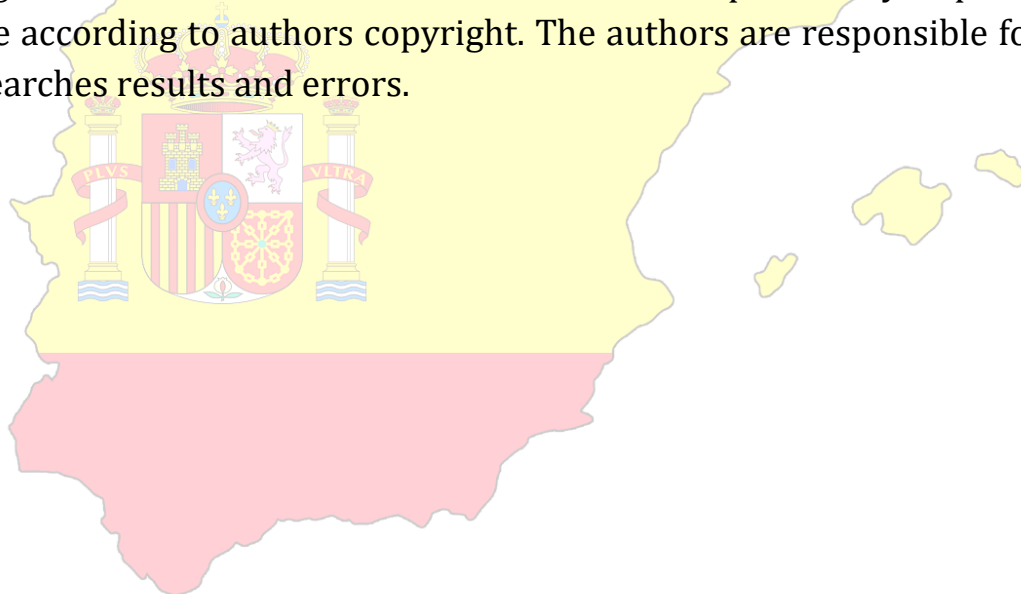


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SOCIAL SECURITY AS AN IDEOLOGICAL PROCESS.**Xidirov Suxrob Norbo'tayevich,**

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Annotation: This article examines social security not only as an economic and legal institution but also as an ideological process that reflects state priorities, social values, and political legitimacy. The study highlights how governments use social security systems to promote solidarity, strengthen national identity, and establish trust in public institutions. Through a critical review of literature, methodological considerations, and empirical insights, the article reveals the dual role of social security: as a mechanism for ensuring social protection and as an ideological instrument for shaping collective consciousness.

Keywords: Social Security, ideology, social policy, welfare state, social protection, legitimacy, solidarity, state ideology.

Introduction

Social security is traditionally studied from the perspectives of economics, law, and social policy. It is viewed as a mechanism designed to provide financial stability, reduce inequality, and guarantee citizens' rights to social protection. However, beyond its practical function, social security also serves as an ideological tool. It conveys messages about state responsibility, the social contract between government and citizens, and the moral values underpinning society. Recognizing social security as an ideological process allows us to better understand its role in consolidating political legitimacy and strengthening social cohesion.

Literature Analysis

Research on social security as ideology can be traced to several academic traditions:

Welfare State Theories – Scholars such as Esping-Andersen argue that welfare regimes reflect broader ideological commitments, ranging from liberal individualism to social-democratic collectivism.

Critical Sociology – Marxist perspectives view social security as a tool to manage social unrest, maintain labor productivity, and ensure stability within capitalist societies.

Political Science Approaches – Social security policies are often framed as instruments for shaping electoral behavior and maintaining the legitimacy of ruling elites.

Cultural Studies – Social security programs embody values such as solidarity, justice, and equality, which are central to the ideological self-image of a state.

Thus, the literature shows that social security is never ideologically neutral; it reflects and reproduces dominant discourses about society and state.

Methods Section

The study uses a qualitative approach combining:

Discourse Analysis: Examining government documents, speeches, and media representations to identify ideological narratives surrounding social security.

Comparative Policy Analysis: Assessing variations in social security systems across different welfare states to highlight ideological differences.

Historical Method: Tracing how social security developed alongside shifts in political ideologies (e.g., Keynesianism, neoliberalism, social democracy).

Results

Social Security, as an ideological process, reflects competing values and beliefs about the role of government, individual responsibility, and collective welfare. Below, I explore this concept by examining how Social Security embodies ideological tensions and evolves through political and social dynamics, aiming for a concise yet comprehensive analysis.

Social Security as an Ideological Construct

Social Security, established in the United States in 1935 under the Social Security Act, is a government-administered program providing retirement, disability, and survivor benefits. Beyond its practical function, it serves as a battleground for ideological debates about economic security, state intervention, and social equity. Its design and implementation are shaped by competing ideologies, including liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, each framing the program differently.

Liberal Perspective: From a liberal viewpoint, Social Security represents a social contract where the state ensures a baseline of economic security for citizens. It aligns with the New Deal ethos of government intervention to mitigate market failures and poverty, particularly for the elderly, who faced destitution during the Great Depression. Liberals view Social Security as a moral and pragmatic necessity, emphasizing collective responsibility and redistribution to reduce inequality. The program's progressive structure—where benefits are partially redistributive, favoring lower earners—reflects this ideology.

Conservative Perspective: Conservatives often critique Social Security as an overreach of government, arguing it undermines individual responsibility and free-market principles. They emphasize personal savings

and private retirement accounts, viewing dependence on state benefits as disincentivizing self-reliance. Some conservatives advocate for privatization or means-testing to limit the program's scope, framing it as a safety net only for the truly needy. However, even conservatives acknowledge its political popularity, which complicates efforts to reform or dismantle it.

Socialist Perspective: Socialists see Social Security as a limited but necessary step toward a broader welfare state. They argue it falls short of true economic justice, as benefits are tied to payroll contributions rather than universal entitlements. Socialists advocate for expanding Social Security into a more comprehensive system, potentially including universal basic income or guaranteed pensions, to address systemic inequalities inherent in capitalism.

Social Security as a Process

The "process" aspect highlights how Social Security evolves through ideological negotiations, shaped by historical, political, and economic contexts:

Historical Context: Social Security emerged during the Great Depression, a crisis that exposed the vulnerabilities of laissez-faire capitalism. Its creation was a compromise between radical demands for universal pensions (e.g., the Townsend Plan) and conservative resistance to government expansion. This negotiation reflects a pragmatic blending of ideologies, balancing relief with fiscal restraint.

Political Dynamics: Social Security's structure—funded by payroll taxes and tied to work history—appeals to both individualistic and collectivist values. It rewards labor (a conservative principle) while providing a social safety net (a liberal goal). Over time, political battles over funding, benefit levels, and eligibility (e.g., raising the retirement age or adjusting cost-of-living increases) reflect ongoing ideological struggles. For example, debates in the 1980s under Reagan led to reforms increasing payroll taxes and gradually raising the retirement age, a compromise between preserving the program and addressing fiscal concerns.

Cultural Narratives: Social Security is framed ideologically through public discourse. Supporters call it an "earned benefit," emphasizing contributions, while critics label it an "entitlement," implying dependency. These narratives shape public perception and policy debates, reinforcing or challenging ideological positions.

Ideological Tensions in Practice

- **Redistribution vs. Individualism:** Social Security's benefit formula redistributes income to lower earners, but its reliance on payroll taxes ties benefits to work, reflecting individualistic values. This duality sparks debates about fairness—whether benefits should be universal or tied to contributions.

- **Sustainability vs. Generosity:** Ideological divides emerge over funding. Liberals push for expanding benefits (e.g., increasing the payroll tax cap),

while conservatives warn of fiscal insolvency, advocating for cuts or privatization. Projections estimate Social Security's trust fund may face a shortfall by 2035 without reforms, intensifying these debates.

- Universalism vs. Means-Testing: Some propose means-testing to limit benefits to the poor, aligning with conservative fiscal restraint, while others advocate universal benefits to maintain broad support, a liberal strategy to ensure program durability.

Contemporary Relevance

Today, Social Security remains a flashpoint for ideological conflict. Proposals to expand benefits (e.g., Biden's 2020 plan to increase minimum benefits) reflect liberal priorities, while calls for privatization or reduced benefits align with conservative goals. The program's future hinges on resolving these tensions, balancing ideological principles with demographic realities like aging populations and declining birth rates.

Social Security is not just a policy but an ideological process, embodying debates about government's role, individual vs. collective responsibility, and economic equity. It evolves through political compromises, cultural narratives, and economic pressures, reflecting the dynamic interplay of liberal, conservative, and socialist ideologies. Understanding it as a process reveals how deeply held beliefs shape social policy and how policy, in turn, shapes societal values.

Discussion

The ideological dimension of social security reveals that it is not merely a neutral technical mechanism but a political tool. While it enhances social protection, it also conveys symbolic messages that reinforce state authority. This dual role can create tensions: for example, austerity-driven welfare retrenchment undermines ideological narratives of solidarity, leading to public discontent. On the other hand, expanded welfare policies can strengthen the image of a caring state, even when primarily driven by political calculation.

Conclusions

Social security should be understood both as a system of economic redistribution and as an ideological process that reflects state priorities and societal values. Its ideological role is visible in shaping citizens' perceptions of justice, fairness, and belonging. Recognizing this duality allows policymakers and scholars to better evaluate the deeper significance of welfare systems in shaping modern societies.

Integrate Ideological Analysis into Social Policy Research – Beyond technical assessments, studies should explore how social security reflects state ideologies.

Promote Transparency in Policy Narratives – Governments should clearly communicate the ideological values guiding social security reforms.

Strengthen Inclusive Narratives – Social security systems should emphasize solidarity and equality to maintain public trust and cohesion.

Adapt to Contemporary Challenges – As globalization and digitalization reshape labor markets, ideological justifications for social protection must also evolve.

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