
"HARDENED BELIEFS" AND THE SUSTENANCE OF POLITICAL ORDER

Fareed J. Sakri *

It is widely believed that in order for any ruling class to preserve its position of power with a certain degree of stability, it must see to it that certain common beliefs are held by the overwhelming majority of the population. Before evaluating this proposition, I must first state some of the basic principles of belief formation in the individual and then introduce the concept of the **Hardened Belief**, a type of belief which I consider most relevant to the study of the maintenance of political order.

Beliefs :

Beliefs can be thought of as reflections of the outside world that leave their mark on the human mind. Such a reflection may correspond accurately to the real world, or it may be a distortion of it. It may be an outcome of man's contact with nature, or with other men. Whatever its origins, a belief may substitute for or satisfy a physiological need; it may be an adaptation to one's environment or a condensation of facts about it. It is true that some beliefs, at a certain point in time, may not have any physiological or adaptive functions but such beliefs are usually residues of a time in a society's past history when they did serve such functions. If we take man as a collective entity, we can state that beliefs are material reality as modified by his mind.¹ Since any human behavior is the product of a process that has to go through a brain affected by all past experiences, no action can be viewed as independent of stored experiences (i.e. beliefs). This is a complicating factor in the social sciences, but it cannot be ignored. It must be remembered, however, that a study of pure beliefs without the economy or history of a society, is of no scientific value.

Belief Formation

The following propositions are suggested as general principles for the process of belief formation. These propositions do not conflict with the generally accepted theories of socialization, personality, or learning.²

1. Beliefs are a product of learning. This is what differentiates them from the involuntary reflex responses to stimuli.

Through avoidance of what is painful and attraction to what is pleasant, every individual develops numerous clusters of impressions, attitudes, beliefs, mental habits, patterns of thought and action, etc. The structures of clusters of previous

* Fareed J. Sakri is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Kuwait University.

patterns will determine whether new messages or stimuli will be accepted, rejected, synthesized, or distorted.

2. Such learning takes place through the individual's contacts with his social and physical environment. The latter must be underlined since this factor is sometimes overlooked by those who seem to think that man's manipulation of other men is almost limitless.³ This is not to deny, however, that man's power over man is remarkable, and that almost all social and political beliefs are likely to be a result of human influences. It must also be recognized that much of the perception of the physical world can be influenced by other people's perceptions of it. A safe conclusion along this line would be: the more abstract is the belief, the more likely is the individual to gain his beliefs through others.

3. Belief formation (or belief modification), like all human learning, does not normally stop at a certain age, but continues throughout life. The rate of such learning, however, may decelerate as the person grows older. But the reason for such deceleration is more likely to be the interference of older Hardened Beliefs (see below) than an organic process of aging."⁴

4. It is generally assumed that young people are highly impressionable. However, while it is easier to instill in them new beliefs, it is also easier to eradicate older beliefs that they may have and to replace them with new ones that may be contradictory. Tenacity of belief increases with age. This is due to the hardening process which requires repetition, learning and time.

5. Like all learning, belief formation is a function of punishment and reward, which can be either material or moral. To propagate certain common beliefs on a massive scale can only be done through the control of the massive means of punishment and reward. This automatically puts the reins of common belief direction in the hands of those who control the means of production and/or the means of violence in the society (i.e. those in political power).⁵

The Concept of "Hardened Belief"

Beliefs are very intangible. They can be illogical, confused, ambivalent, and ambiguous. They are probably the most difficult things to deal with scientifically. In social science they are referred to as values, attitudes, convictions, ideology, culture, etc. But all these are vague terms, and there can be no doubt that certain beliefs play a much more important role than others in determining social behavior. Numerous beliefs may be flexible, modifiable and changeable. These are a product of little learning, and we may refer to them as "soft beliefs." Soft beliefs vary greatly from one individual to another in the same society. They are the most numerous beliefs and are shared, if at all, by very few individuals, but they cannot serve as predictors

of social behavior, and they hardly have any function in the stability of the political order.

Therefore, a systematic study of the role of beliefs in society requires a differentiation of those few **Hardened Beliefs** (HB) from the myriads of irrelevant soft beliefs and vague "values." Studying the process of the hardening of belief makes it possible for us to see beliefs as just another element in a complex equation involving man and his social and physical environment, rather than as a vague mysterious factor that determines human actions.

HB's differ from other beliefs in that they are a product of intensified, repetitious social learning that takes place over a long span in an individual's life. A belief can be hardened to a lesser or greater degree depending on how early in a person's life the belief is implemented, how frequently it is reinforced, and how infrequently it is challenged or contradicted in relation to a person's whole life experience. An HB is not solely dependent on how early in the individual's life it was instilled. Hardening of belief requires repeated conditioning long after adulthood. Otherwise, if an early conditioning is neglected, the belief produced is likely to soften again. Societies either consciously or unconsciously act in accordance with this rule. Whether such beliefs are political, religious or otherwise, they see to it that the symbols of such beliefs be invoked repeatedly and frequently, be that thru a pledge of allegiance to the flag or the rituals of a Sunday mass. It may not be referred to as such, but what is actually being accomplished is a hardening of beliefs.

As was mentioned above, HB's are not a fixed category for, there are different degrees of hardening. **Completely Hardened Beliefs** are those that the individual clings to no matter how much clear and concrete evidence to the contrary becomes available to him. Such beliefs are inextractable, an integral part of the personality and will die only with the death of the whole person. All new learning will have to be modified in case it bears any relationship to these beliefs. All perception of reality will have to fit the Completely Hardened Beliefs even at the cost of distortions. All rationality or logic that the person is capable of in other areas of thought will cease to function once this Hardened Core is touched. An HB develops a built-in defense mechanism that becomes an important functioning part of the core. Any opposing expressions to HB's pose a threat to the person as a whole. Such Anti-Beliefs are either shut off completely, or distorted through selective perception as to fit in with the HB's. If this is not successful, the person expressing such Anti-Beliefs is automatically branded a 'liar', a 'fool', a 'traitor', etc. Because of the avoidance of understanding the Anti-Belief, any resemblance to it is automatically labelled false or evil, and thus dispensed with, without any further question. Communities sharing certain HB's (ideology, values, of convictions) will use censorship, persecution, ostracism, physical punish-

ment, or even complete elimination of those expressing Anti-Beliefs (an example of this would be the burning of 'heretics' by 'devoted' Christians). 6

A peculiarity of the HB is that the believer can easily point a finger at the irregularities and absurdities of Anti-Belief systems, while his own HB's, odd as they may be, are referred to as "human nature", the "truth", the "fabric of society", its "heritage", its "cherished values", and so on.

HB's can be thought of as compulsive forces that either compel a person to commit certain acts, or prevent him from selecting alternatives, sometimes at a high risk. When a belief is completely hardened, the person automatically responds to symbols associated with it, and his response is a chain reaction of a programmed series of reflex acts. Such behavior can be compared to that of post-hypnotic suggestion. In both situations, only unsurmountable physical obstacles can prevent the programmed actions from taking place, and if this happens, the person is likely to go through painful frustrations.

When a belief is completely hardened, it can be mistaken for an instinct or a part of human nature. What is extraordinary about this phenomenon is that the belief is hardened through the use of rewards and punishment that are determined by instinct (i.e., need for food, avoidance of pain, etc.). Then secondary or acquired rewards (or punishments) that may be of a purely symbolic nature may be used just as effectively, once the person has been conditioned to them. What has been learned today may be used as a reward tomorrow, and the acquired need may become stronger than the need that induced it.

Contrary to their basic needs, people can learn to become vegetarians, monks, or nuns, or at least not to have sex until they get married at a certain age; they can even be indoctrinated to jump into a ravine and die. They can be led to climb the highest and most dangerous mountain "because it is there." (While in reality they do these things because these ideas were put in their heads)

In all these cases, the HB appears stronger than instincts. The person (or group) will not submit to the most severe punishment; neither will he be bought with the most generous rewards.⁷

HB's should be differentiated from phobias or certain psychopathological manifestations that are usually scars of a childhood traumatic experience. They can occur in any person regardless of his mental capacity or psychological health.

We must also be careful not to label as HB's, any ideas expressed strongly by certain individuals because of enough evidence available to them, or simply because they like to drive in a point. HB's may or may not correspond to external reality. They may be valid or invalid. That is of secondary importance. Their most

important trait is the tenacity, the religiosity, and the rigidity with which they are held even after they have become self-destructive.

But above all, we must refrain from using the term as a self-defence weapon against any beliefs that pose a threat to our own HB's. HB's can be identified only in the light of a person's total history, and should never be concluded from his observable behavior.

Since HB's are a product of a homogeneity of conditioning in the socialization process, we can deduce that beliefs are less likely to harden in the larger heterogeneous communities. Like bodies of water, more stagnation is to be expected in the small pond than the cross current, more hardening of belief in the small town than in the great, dynamic metropolis.⁸

But while common HB's are less in number and intensity in the larger more developed societies, they are there nevertheless, and can be identified. They can usually be traced far back into the history and legends of a society. They are held and expressed with emotion which may be awe, sacredness, love, hate, disgust, or hostility. They are frequently expressed in the mass media, and may range from fairy tales to philosophy, from children's books to scholarly works, from myth to science, and they are rarely, if ever, challenged or contradicted.

In isolated and more primitive communities it is much easier to identify HB's, for there they are more likely to dominate all action, and to strictly limit all other mental activity. The more developed the society, the less dominant is this kind of belief. A developed society is usually composed of millions of people with numerous subgroups with each of these having its own HB's. Nevertheless, when such a society is stabilized, in spite of all the conflicting interests and beliefs, certain few HB's are held in common among all the subgroups. No one advocates the destruction of the big structure. One may suggest the replacing of a few bricks here and there, the whitewash of an old wall, the change of the hinges on a rusty door, and so on. Another may prefer the stench of old age, refusing to miss the sound of the rusty old door, etc. The controversies revolve around secondary issues of this kind, but the main structure remains sacred, and reinforced by all the institutions of society to which the individual is exposed from the nursery school to the old age home.⁹ Thus a few beliefs pertaining to the main structure are hardened constantly even in the most complex social systems.

The repeated verbal expression of the most common HB's is the outcome of their intrinsic nature as well as a defense mechanism for automatic reinforcement, a self-reassurance, and a weapon against the threat of an Anti-Belief system. Such repeated expression serves also as a self-perpetuating mechanism for the transmission of these beliefs to the new generations, and their hardening in them. The

system of perpetuation becomes an automated flow; i.e., it does not need deliberate planning on anybody's part for its propagation.¹⁰

Authority and the Hardening of Beliefs

Quite often, all that is needed to produce a complex HB system is to inculcate a single belief in one authority. Once such an authority is established, it (the authority) becomes like the trunk of a tree with branches of belief connected to it. Sometimes these branches may be cut off, and new branches with different forms grow in their stead. The hardening lies mainly in the trunk, and when the trunk falls, the branches will fall also. Authorities may be living institutions or mythical figures; they may be kings, popes, presidents, ancestors, prophets, saints, priests, scientists, gods, magicians, businessmen, political parties, holy books, etc. The establishment of a belief in an authority is most useful for purposes of control on the part of the ruling elite, for through the hardening of one's belief in the authority, the hardening of a whole belief system becomes not only more easily attainable, but also more manipulative and modifiable. With the concept of authority we can explain how similar sets of beliefs can be hardened in many individuals at the same time, even when there is no logical connectivity among the various units within these sets.

Hardened Beliefs and the Political Order :

In the first part of this essay, I tried to concentrate on the phenomenon of belief hardening, sometimes focusing on its extreme manifestations, perhaps occasionally giving the impression that HB's are something solid as a rock, unbreakable and everlasting. In this part, shall try to evaluate the reliability of HB's as political stabilizing factors.

Without being referred to as such, HB's have always been held with great esteem as political stabilizing agents. Among many thinkers, there has existed a deep faith in the power of such beliefs to cement the society together in spite of its conflicts of interests, class divisions, and injustices. Quite often, beliefs have been thought of as substitutes for material human needs, as if they were some magical and mystical substances that can fill in all the defective cracks of society.

Perhaps part of the reason for the faith in such beliefs is the simplistic way in which they are supposed to be induced. It is sometimes implied that the desired beliefs can be instilled in people's minds by sheer exposure. Sometimes "values" are mysteriously assumed to be an integral part of a certain people's "culture" or "national character", an inherited peculiarity of this special people.

Probably, in the history of Western thought, Plato was the first one to suggest

the use of a myth or a "noble lie" in order to make people satisfied with their position in life. He thought that the citizens of his Republic could easily accept the tale that they were molded inside the earth, and that the god who fashioned them mixed gold in those who were fit to rule, silver in those who were fit to fight, and brass and iron in the lowly farmers and craftsmen. Plato explains that if the first generation does not believe this, their sons and descendants will, and finally all of mankind.¹¹ Perhaps Plato had some idea about the hardening of beliefs, but it was not explained. In all probability what he meant was that a belief, no matter how fantastic, can be accepted if it is instilled at an early age. What is also worth mentioning here is that Plato may be considered the father of idealistic thinking in Western thought. The idea of 'good' to him existed as an independent supreme "form" or "essence" in the universe, like the light of the sun, and could not be attained except by philosophers whose abstract knowledge had prepared them for it. Plato had so much faith in the power of ideas that he feared that any foreign ideas, whether in poetry, music, or religion, might endanger the whole fabric of society.¹²

Plato's successor, Aristotle, avoided Plato's utopianism, and concentrated on politics as the art of the possible. He believed that, regardless of the type of regime there would always be the "wealthy" and the "people". Other than these, there had to be the slaves and manual workers ("human tools"). The most important safeguard to maintain constitutional continuity, according to him, was the educating of citizens for the way of living that belonged to their constitution, and the formation of the right habits for their "polities."¹³

Machiavelli (1469-1527), who tried to master all the tricks of unscrupulous ruling elites for the handling of their subjects did not neglect the manipulations of the political order. Above all, he recommended that the elite should use religion (even when it is believed to be false) to maintain order. He even recommended the imitation of the use of religious beliefs by the Romans to terrorize the minds of the people. ¹⁴

A more modern social thinker, Saint-Simon (1760-1825) formulated an elaborate program for an industrial society, where "the check on egoism ... is to be Christian brotherly love ... the fate of the proletariat is to be improved as much as possible, not so much for their sake as for that of the elite. There are two ways of keeping this class in check: either use force to impose the social order, or make them love it."¹⁵ This vision was that of a "Scientific European Society". But in spite of its being scientific, he thought "a spiritual bond will be necessary — a common body for it is conflicting beliefs which lead inevitably to war."¹⁶

A more recent successor to this "positivist" thinker was Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). He emphasized the division of labor and differentiation of functions in the new "organic" society, which would naturally include various social divisions. Making

everyone content with his lot is not achieved by giving him more or less, but by convincing him that he has no right to more. For this purpose, Durkheim thought that an authority must be established to tell the people what is right for them, an authority whose superiority people must acknowledge. To achieve this, Durkheim stressed the role of education, which teaches the child to accept social authority and duty." 17

According to Gaetano Mosco (1858-1941) the ruling class cements its rule through "the political formula", which is a "universal moral principle." For the ruling class to be able to rule, he says, it needs a body of religious and philosophical beliefs to be held as sacred by the majority of the people.¹⁸

What is common among all these thinkers we mentioned is their strong faith in the power of beliefs as a means of controlling the masses, and in the ease with which these beliefs can be instituted and maintained, contradictory though they may be with actual living conditions. In general, they had a low estimate of human ability to judge and compare. Of course, most of these thinkers were suggesting the use of older more reliable HB's rather than establishing new ones. But here again, there seems to be a deep faith in the permanency of these beliefs regardless of the drastic changes taking place in the world such as the development of technology, industrialization, and means of transportation and communication.

It is taken for granted that the ruling elites can somehow monopolize the socialization process of millions of people and prevent the interference of any factors from outside the society. It is also apparently assumed that beliefs can be formed and hardened only by what is verbally fed to them through propaganda machines, and that the material life situation itself cannot interfere and subvert the official socialization directed from the top, or at least, can prevent it from hardening to the extent of making it a useful tool for creating the desired solidarity.

Hitler, who can be considered a caricature of a political thinker, applied these theories on a massive scale, pushing them to their logical extremes, using in particular the old HB's of nationalism, religion, racism, etc. at a time of insecurity and fear. It worked at least for a while, especially when millions of unemployed got jobs (in the arms factories), and millions of others got an unprecedented kind of entertainment.

Hitler also had very little respect for the intelligence of the masses. In his instructions on propaganda, he insisted on simplicity, low intellectual level, one-sidedness and emotionalism. Propaganda "must confine itself to a few points and be repeated."¹⁹ He was a believer in ideals and in the effect of myth, which he and his regime considered to be more important than science and technology. In spite of his sophistication in some areas of propaganda, his method was that of a stage hypnotist who thought he could put millions of people under his spell, and ingest in their

heads any fantastic belief he wanted. In all probability, the scientific outlook surrounding Germany would have sooner or later subverted Hitler's myths (which would have been helped by Germany's eventual falling behind technologically and economically).

It is unfortunate that some of this idealism found its way into some underdeveloped countries that need to develop their productive capacity rather than inculcate their people with new fantasies.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss this complicated problem here. Suffice it to say that nationalism may be psychologically useful for underdeveloped countries to help them regain their self-esteem and confidence, especially after having been under the domination of stronger powers. But unless this belief is coupled with hard work, the development of natural and human resources, etc., nationalism will remain another abstract HB which can generate a lot of talk, poetry, and song, and nothing more. The ruling elite would like to be like a coach who, instead of training his team to play the game, spends his time giving them a "pep talk".

It was natural that idealist thinking, which could be used against Marxist materialism, had to find its way into liberal thought. The most important school that influenced American thought was that of Max Weber whose school was adopted by Talcott Parsons and later popularized by Seymour Martin Lipset and several others.

Lipset wrote an analytical history of the United States based on its apparently permanent "values." These "values," it turns out, are broad, ambiguous, hortatory, and unrealistic. We learn that two values have been constant in all American history, namely, "individual achievement," and "equality." But this does not mean that the country has been static, says Lipset. Great changes have taken place since the Revolution, but all the changes have been made with continuous adjustments to the constant unchanging "value system." Contrary to what Marx said, Lipset informs us that "Basic alterations of social character or values are rarely produced by change in the means of production, distribution and exchange alone." (This "alone" added there is interesting! Who ever said that these variables "alone" change values even "rarely?") But then where did these immortal values come from? In this case, they did not come from a Hegelian universe, but from some glorious moments in American history, "an interplay between the Puritan tradition and the Revolutionary ethos."²⁰

It is not explained why, out of all American history, it so happens that this kindergarten part determined the basic "values" for America forever after. One may wonder why, if the Revolution left such a deep mark on America, did America ever turn out to be so counter-revolutionary in our time? Does it have anything to do with the changing economic situation? We may also wonder how a society that was so equalitarian accepted slavery in its Constitution. How can the "value" of equa-

lity harden when there is so much inequality in the society itself? Obviously, in idealist thought there is a separation between what people say and what people do even though "values" are supposed to direct all human events somehow, like invisible fingers from above, without touching them. The analyst can do this, apparently, by the selection of such "stretch values" which can be made to fit societies of various sizes and forms.

Idealist thought has affected many aspects of Western society including its commercial and political practices. This is represented by what is referred to as public relations and the "image" concept. Public relations aims at producing a positive "image" about a product, a company, or a politician running for high office, etc. The "image" according to this salesmanship school, does not have to correspond to reality.²¹ Though public relations men are sophisticated enough to avoid the straight lie in promoting the "image," they rely mostly on selected fractions of positive "facts," playing on all the prejudices and conditioned reflexes of their audience. This kind of slick approach may succeed in selling a product or a politician to a number of people, but it may be undermining the very institutions that the political order would like to promote. This happens every time the product does not satisfy the produced image."²²

Hardened Beliefs and the Control of Man :

Many authors in the West, especially those engaged in the war against "totalitarianism," express a great deal of concern about the use of modern technology of communication together with the behavioral sciences, for a "total" control of human behavior, causing the individuality to dissolve into the collectivity, and thus bringing about the end of "the free human spirit."

The question is: when was man ever so free? Even before man began to live in a society — if there was ever such a time — his mind had to be manipulated by the natural elements around him. He lived in a state of constant and imaginary fear, and certainly his helpless mind could not grasp all the frightening mysteries around him.

When societies developed, the domination of the group was added to the domination of nature. The socialization of new generations did not need any modern technology for its powerful effectiveness. As was hinted earlier, the more primitive the society, the more likely it is for a few collective HB's to dominate the totality of life. But it is also a fact that without any HB's to control man's behaviour to a certain degree, survival of any society would be impossible. The question is not whether man is free or not, but how large a margin of freedom he is left with, after his harmful behavior has been put under control.

FOOTNOTES

1. We owe such awareness about the direct relationship between the material world and the mind to Karl Marx more than to anybody else. In this essay, however, I shall avoid the question as to whether matter determines mind or vice-versa since it is an irrelevant point to this discussion.
2. On the theories of socialization and personality, the following works are suggested:
Orville G. Brian, Jr. and Stanton Wheeler: **Socialization after Childhood**, Wiley, New York, 1966; Ross Stagner: **Psychology of Personality**, 3rd ed., McGraw Hill, New York, 1961; Ross Stagner: **Psychology of Personality**, 3rd ed., McGraw Hill, New York, 1961.
Norman Bradburn: "The Cultural Context of Personality Theory" in Joseph Wepman and Ralph W. Hein, eds: **Concepts of Personality**, MacMillan, New York, 1959.
On political Socialization, the following are suggested:
Herbert Hyman: **Political Socialization, A Study in the Psychology of Political Behavior**, MacMillan, New York, 1959; Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt: **Political Socialization**, Little Brown, Boston, 1969. A recommendation reference on learning theory would be the well-known work of Neil E. Miller and John Dollard: **Social Learning and Imitation** Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1941.
3. Perhaps one major weakness in the theories of such a behaviorist as B. F. Skinner is that he seems to imply that man, the scientist can be the sole agent of "social engineering", and his "engineering" can be practiced without competition from non-human sources
See B. F. Skinner: **Walden II**, MacMillan, New York, 1942.
See also, B. F. Skinner: "Freedom and the Control of Man", **The American Scholar**, Winter 1955-56, pp. 47-65.
4. That is unless the hardening of belief is organic, which is doubtful. Needless to say we are not concerned here with such ailments as senility and others that are associated with brain cell damage.
5. Marx and Engels put it this way: "... the class which is the ruling material force of society, is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control, at the same time of the means of mental production . . ." Marx and Engels' "The German Ideology" in Howard Selsam and Harry Martel: **Reader in Marxist Philosophy**, International Publishers, New York, 1963, p. 199.
6. I owe some of the above observations to Milton Rokeach: **The Open and Closed Mind**, Basic Books Inc., 1960, pp. 36-62. Rokeach offers some of these as symptoms of what he calls a "closed mind." The main reason Rokeach's concept was not adopted is because he implies that such a person is a stereotype. While it is true that the more hardened the beliefs the more likely is the mind shut off from beliefs threatening it, this does not constitute a special personality type, for the same person may be quite rational and "open-minded" in most other areas of thought. Hardened Beliefs are environmentally produced, and are not the monopoly of any special type of personality.
7. Perhaps the most severe punishment ever inflicted has been that of the United States against the Vietnamese people. All that awesome power could not make those people

change their mind about their continued struggle. It is worth noting also that the most generous offers of aid to North Vietnam failed as well.

8. Considering anti-communism and belief in God as Hardened Beliefs in America, some empirical studies have established that these beliefs are more predominant in smaller communities. For example a survey conducted by N.O.R.C. showed that 40% of those in metropolitan areas, 32% of those in other cities, 23% of those in small towns, and 19% of those on farms were "more tolerant" towards communists and atheists. See Samuel Stouffer: *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*, Doubleday & Co. N.Y., 1955, p. 127.
9. Harold Lasswell writes: "The individualism of bourgeois society like the communism of the socialized state must be inculcated from the nursery to the grave." Harold Lasswell: *Politics*, Meridian Books, World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1958, p. 32.
10. Lasswell hit this point when he wrote: "A well-established ideology perpetuates itself with little planned propaganda from those it benefits most." *Ibid*, p. 31.
11. Francis MacDonald Conford, ed.: *The Republic of Plato*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966, p. 106, 107.
12. *Ibid*, pp. 114-114.
13. Aristotle: *The Politics*, trans. & ed., by T. A. Sinclair, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1962, p. 216.
14. Niccolo Machiavelli: *The Prince and The Discourses*, Modern Library ed., Random House, New York, 1950, p. 150, also pp. 149-164.
15. Irving M. Zeitlin: *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood, N.J., 1968, p. 65.
16. *Ibid*, p. 67.
17. Emile Durkheim: *The Division of Labor in Society*, The Free Press, New York, p. 200, 88.
18. Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1939, esp. pp. 70-119.
19. Adolf Hitler: *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1943, pp. 176-186.
20. Seymour Martin Lipset: *The First New Nation*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1967, pp. 115-158, 1st quote on p. 117, 118; 2nd quote on p. 115.
21. For an account on how the deceptive methods of public relations were used successfully in the election of the "New Nixon" in 1968, see Joe McGinnis: *The Selling of the President*, Trident Press, New York, 1970.
22. For example, one Gallup poll in the summer of 1975 showed a considerable lack of confidence in the basic foundation of the American economy, the free enterprise system, 42% of those interviewed (a representative sample of the whole U.S.) said they had "some-very little-none" confidence in this system. Though 54% had a "great deal" of confidence, for something as basic as this, this is a rather low percentage. From "Economic System Not Loved" by Dr. George Gallup, as published by *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, North Carolina, July 10, 1975.
23. Joseph Wood Krutch: *The Measure of Man*, Grosset & Dunlap, 1954, p. 75.
24. Jacques Ellul: *Propoganda, The Formation of Man's Attitudes*, (translated from the French), Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1973, p. XVI, XVII.

المعتقدات المثبتة وديمومة النظام السياسي

د . فريد صقري

يركز هذا البحث على ظاهرة تصلب المعتقدات عند الأفراد ، كما ويقدم مفهوم المعتقدات المثبتة شارحا كيفية تكوينها . وللمعتقدات هذه أهمية خاصة في ضمان استمرارية واستقرار المجتمع السياسي . ويتكون هذا النوع من المعتقدات عبر تفاعل الفرد ، منذ طفولته ، مع البيئة البشرية والطبيعية التي يجري الاحتكاك بها .

وفي كل مجتمع ، تقوم مؤسسات عديدة بعملية تعزيز عدد من المعتقدات حتى تجعل منها عقائد مشتركة بين العدد الأكبر من أفراد المجتمع . ويتم هذا بواسطة جهود تعليمية تعتمد مثل غيرها على وسيلتي الثواب والعقاب ، حيث يمنح الثواب المادى أو المعنوى لمن يتقبل مثل هذه المعتقدات ويمارسها ، بينما يكون القصاص المادى والمعنوى من نصيب كل من يخالفها . وكلما تكررت هذه العملية على مدى الزمن ، تصلبت هذه المعتقدات أكثر الى درجة أن التصدى لها يصبح أمرا لا يمكن حتى التفكير فيه . وعندما تكتمل عملية التثبيت هذه ، يتعلق الانسان بتلك المعتقدات على الرغم من كل ما يمكن أن يواجهه من اثباتات معاكسة . ذلك لأنها تصبح عقائد جذرية لا يمكن انتزاعها لأنها تكون عندئذ قد غدت جزءا لا يتجزأ من شخصية الفرد . بل أن الكثيرين يمزجسون بينها وبين الغريزة أو ما قد يسمونه « طبيعة الانسان » . ان تعزيز هذه المعتقدات لا تعنى صحتها أو عدم صحتها وإنما المهم هو التعلق الزائد بها وسيطرتها على السلوك والافكار الأخرى وغنى عن الذكر أن الذين يسيطرون على وسائل الثواب والعقاب على المستوى العام (أى أصحاب السلطة السياسية) هم الذين لهم الكلمة الأخيرة في تكوين هذه المعتقدات وتقويتها .

يتساءل القسم الثانى من هذا المقال عن مدى إمكانية اعتماد النخبة السياسية على هذه المعتقدات للإبقاء على النظام السياسى القائم . وهنا يبدو لنا خلافا لما قاله البعض ، أن التقدم التكنولوجى يمنع احتمال تعزيز عقائد كثيرة ويخفف من درجة تقلب تلك التى تتعزز . وهكذا تصبح السيطرة النفسية الجماعية على الفرد أقل بكثير مما هى عليه فى المجتمعات البدائية حيث يطغى هذا النوع من العقيدة على مجمل سلوك الانسان ونشاطه الفكرى .

ان المعتقدات المثبتة ، على الرغم من ديمومتها فى الأفراد ، ليست أمرا ثابتا ودائما فى المجتمع ككل . فهى لا بد أن تتغير بالنهاية بعدما يتغير الوضع المادى الذى استدعى تكوينها وبعدها تتغير البنية الاجتماعية المبنية على الوضع الجديد . وعليه فان هناك حدودا لاعتماد قادة السلطة السياسية على المعتقدات المعززة القديمة وقد تبقى المعتقدات القديمة مدة طويلة لكنها محدودة ، ويصبح ازدياد تصدعها أمرا ملحوظا بين جيل وجيل . وفى النهاية ، تصبح افكارا

مجردة دون اى تأثير على سلوك الافراد . ويعيش المجتمع فى ظروف التغيير هذه ، فترة اضطراب ونزاع ، خاصة بين الآباء والابناء ، بين الذين تصلبت معتقداتهم تصلبا تاما ، وبين اولئك الذين تدخلت العوامل المادية الجديدة فى عملية التقليل من تصلب معتقداتهم . وهنا تصبح هذه الاخيرة التى كان لها وظيفة مهمة ونافعة فى الماضى ، عثرة فى سبيل التكيف للتغيير الجديد المرغوب فيه وفى مثل هذا الوضع ، لا يعود بإمكان اصحاب السلطة الاستعاضة بالافكار القديمة المجردة عن الحاجات الانسانية الاخرى التى يفرضها التطور الاجتماعى الجديد .