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Political science

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Political Idea

Conservatism is opposition to rapid changes, and supports keeping traditions in society. Gradualism is one form.

The first known use of the term in a political context was by François-René de Chateaubriand in 1818. This was during the period of Bourbon restoration that sought to roll back the policies of the French Revolution.

The term is associated with right-wing politics. It has been used to describe a wide range of views. There is no single set of policies that are regarded as conservative, because the meaning of conservatism depends on a given place and time.

Conservatism tends to support the notion of faith, particularly in Abrahamic traditions in countries where those are the main religions. In England, the publication of Edmund Burke's book *Reflections on the revolution in France*. In his book, he suggested people should be satisfied, and advocated a caring government. The two ideas go together.

Some conservatives seek to keep things as they are, while others want a return to the way things were at an earlier time. A conservative party in England formed which wanted better co-operation between rich and poor, democracy, and some aspects of a welfare state. This was also favoured by conservatives in France and other parts of Europe

Forms of conservatism

There are many forms of conservatism namely

(1) Liberal conservatism

incorporates the classical liberal view of minimal government intervention in the economy. Individuals should be free to participate in the market and generate wealth without government interference. However, individuals cannot be thoroughly depended on to act responsibly in other spheres of life, therefore liberal conservatives believe that a strong state is necessary to ensure law and order and social institutions are needed to nurture a sense of duty and responsibility to the nation. Liberal conservatism is a variant of conservatism that is strongly influenced by liberal stances.

As these latter two terms have had different meanings over time and across countries, liberal conservatism also has a wide variety of meanings. Historically, the term often referred to the combination of economic liberalism, which champions laissez-faire markets, with the classical conservatism concern for established tradition, respect for authority and religious values. It contrasted itself with classical liberalism, which supported freedom for the individual in both the economic and social spheres.

Over time, the general conservative ideology in many countries adopted economic liberal arguments and the term liberal conservatism was replaced with conservatism. This is also the case in countries where liberal economic ideas have been the tradition such as the United States and are thus considered conservative. In other countries where liberal conservative movements have entered the political mainstream, such as Italy and Spain, the terms liberal and conservative may be synonymous. The liberal conservative tradition in the United States combines the economic individualism of the classical liberals with a Burkean form of conservatism (which has also become part of the American conservative tradition, such as in the writings of Russell Kirk).

A secondary meaning for the term liberal conservatism that has developed in Europe is a combination of more modern conservative (less traditionalist) views with those of social liberalism. This has developed as an opposition to the more collectivist views of socialism. Often this involves stressing what are now conservative views of free market economics and belief in individual responsibility, with social liberal views on defence of civil rights, environmentalism and support for a limited welfare state. In continental Europe, this is sometimes also translated into English as social conservatism.

(2) Conservative liberalism

is a variant of liberalism that combines values and policies with conservative stances. The roots of conservative liberalism are found at the beginning of the history of liberalism. Until the two World Wars, in most European countries the political class was formed by conservative liberals, from Germany to Italy. Events after World War I brought the more radical version of classical liberalism to a more conservative (i.e. more moderate) type of liberalism.

(3) Libertarian conservatism

describes certain political ideologies most prominently within the United States which combine libertarian economic issues with aspects of conservatism. Its four main branches are constitutionalism, paleolibertarianism, small government conservatism and Christian libertarianism. They generally differ from paleoconservatives, in that they favor more personal and economic freedom.

(4) National conservatism

is a political term used primarily in Europe to describe a variant of conservatism which concentrates more on national interests than standard conservatism as well as upholding cultural and ethnic identity, while not being outspokenly nationalist or supporting a far-right approach. In Europe, national conservatives are usually eurosceptics.[20][21]

National conservatism is heavily oriented towards the traditional family and social stability as well as in favour of limiting immigration. As such, national conservatives can be distinguished from economic conservatives, for whom free market economic policies, deregulation and fiscal conservatism are the main priorities. Some commentators have identified a growing gap between national and economic conservatism: "[M]ost parties of the Right [today] are run by economic conservatives who, in varying degrees, have marginalized social, cultural, and national conservatives". National conservatism is also related to traditionalist conservatism.

Traditionalist conservatism is a political philosophy emphasizing the need for the principles of natural law and transcendent moral order, tradition, hierarchy and organic unity, agrarianism, classicism and high culture as well as the intersecting spheres of loyalty. Some traditionalists have embraced the labels "reactionary" and "counterrevolutionary", defying the stigma that has attached to these terms since the Enlightenment. Having a hierarchical view of society, many traditionalist conservatives, including a few Americans, defend the monarchical political structure as the most natural and beneficial social arrangement.